

natalie clifford barney

ADVENTURES
OF THE MIND

Adventures of the Mind

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*The Cutting Edge: Lesbian Life
and Literature*

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY SUSAN SNIADER LANSER

Adventures of the Mind: The Memoirs of Natalie Clifford Barney

TRANSLATED BY JOHN SPALDING GATTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY KARLA JAY

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natalie clifford barney

ADVENTURES
OF THE MIND

*Translated with annotations by
John Spalding Gatton*

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Contents

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Acknowledgments | ix |
| Foreword by Karla Jay | xiii |
| A Note on the Translation | xvii |
| Introduction by Karla Jay | 1 |

1. Forewarning 19

Part One

2. First Adventure: Oscar Wilde in the United States 31
3. Pierre Louÿs circa 1900: Literary Beginnings 32
4. Anatole France: Among the Amazons 45
5. Remy de Gourmont: The Amazon's Friend 49
6. Marcel Proust 57
7. Rainer Maria Rilke: Belated Appreciation 68
8. Fleg, Then Zangwill, Then Fleg 75
9. Gabriele D'Annunzio: At Home 79
10. Max Jacob 86

viii *Contents*

11. Doctor Jésus-Christ Mardrus 92
12. The Critical State of André Rouveyre 96
13. Paul Valéry: The Dawn of an Academician: An Attempt
at Clarification 102
14. Legends and Anecdotes, Translators and Detractors 124

Part Two

15. An Academy of Women: Foreword 133
16. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, President 141
17. English Bohemian Life and Anna Wickham 144
18. Colette 151
19. Rachilde 153
20. Aurel: Festival in Return 155
21. Mina Loy 158
22. Elisabeth de Gramont 161
23. Djuna Barnes 165
24. Gertrude Stein 171
25. Romaine Brooks: The Case of a Great Painter of the
Human Face 180
26. Renée Vivien 184
27. Retrospective of Marie Lenéru by Magdeleine
Marx Paz 191
28. P.P.C.: Leave-Taking 197

Notes 199

Bibliography 269

Index 279

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Foreword

Karla Jay

Professor of English and Women's Studies, Pace University

Despite the efforts of lesbian and feminist publishing houses and a few university presses, the bulk of the most important lesbian works has traditionally been available only from rare book dealers, in a few university libraries, or in gay and lesbian archives. This series intends to make representative examples of this neglected and insufficiently known literature available to a broader audience by reissuing selected classics and by putting into print for the first time lesbian novels, diaries, letters, and memoirs that have special interest and significance, but which have moldered in libraries and private collections for decades or even centuries, known only to the few scholars who had the courage and financial wherewithal to track them down.

Their names have been known for a long time—Sappho, the Amazons of North Africa, the Beguines, Aphra Behn, Queen Christina, Emily Dickinson, the Ladies of Llangollen, Radclyffe Hall, Natalie Clifford Barney, H.D. . . . and so many others from every nation, race, and era. But government and religious officials burned their writings, historians and literary scholars denied they were lesbians, powerful men kept their books out of print, and influential archivists locked up their ideas far from sympathetic eyes. Yet, some dedicated scholars and readers still

knew who they were, made pilgrimages to the cities and villages where they had lived and to the graveyards where they rested. They passed around tattered volumes of letters, diaries, and biographies, in which they had underlined what seemed to be telltale hints of a secret or different kind of life. Where no hard facts existed, legends were invented. The few precious and often available pre-Stonewall lesbian classics, such as *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall, *The Price of Salt* by Claire Morgan [Patricia Highsmith], and *Desert of the Heart* by Jane Rule, were cherished. Lesbian pulp was devoured. One of the primary goals of this series is to give the more neglected works, which actually constitute the vast majority of lesbian writing, the attention they deserve.

A second but no less important aim is to present the “cutting edge” of contemporary lesbian scholarship and theory across a wide range of disciplines. Practitioners of lesbian studies have not adopted a uniform approach to literary theory, history, sociology, or any other discipline, nor should they. This series intends to present an array of voices that truly reflect the diversity of the lesbian community. To help me in this task, I am lucky enough to be assisted by a distinguished editorial board that reflects various professional, class, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds as well as a spectrum of interests and sexual preferences.

At present lesbian studies occupies a small, precarious, and somewhat contested pied-à-terre between gay studies and women’s studies. Gay studies is still in its infancy, especially if one compares it to other disciplines that have been part of the core curriculum of every child and adolescent for several decades or even centuries. However, while one of the newest, it may also be the fastest growing discipline—at least in North America. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual studies conferences are doubling or tripling their attendance. While only a handful of degree-granting programs currently exist, that number is also apt to multiply quickly in the next decade.

In comparison, women's studies is a well-established and burgeoning discipline with hundreds of minors, majors, and graduate programs throughout the United States. Lesbian studies occupies a peripheral place in the discourse in such programs, characteristically restricted to one lesbian-centered course, usually literary or historical in nature. In the many women's studies series that are now offered by university presses, generally only one or two books on a lesbian subject or issue are included in each series, and lesbian voices are restricted to writing on those topics considered of special interest to gay people. We are not called upon to offer our opinions on motherhood, war, education, or on the lives of women not publicly identified as lesbians. As a result, lesbian experience is too often marginalized and restricted.

In contrast, this series will prioritize, centralize, and celebrate lesbian visions of literature, art, philosophy, love, religion, ethics, history, and a myriad of other topics. In *The Cutting Edge*, readers can find authoritative versions of important lesbian texts that have been carefully prepared and introduced by scholars. Readers can also find the work of academics and independent scholars who write passionately about lesbian studies and issues or other aspects of life from a distinctly lesbian viewpoint. These visions are not only various but intentionally contradictory, for lesbians speak from differing class, racial, ethnic, and religious perspectives. Each author also speaks from and about a certain moment of time, and few would argue that being a lesbian today is the same as it was for Sappho or Anne Lister. Thus, no attempt has been made to homogenize that diversity and no agenda exists to attempt to carve out a "politically correct" lesbian studies perspective at this juncture in history or to pinpoint the "real" lesbians in history. It seems more important for all the voices to be heard before those with the blessings of aftersight lay the mantle of authenticity on any one vision of the world, or on any particular set of women.

What each work in this series does share, however, is a common realization that gay women are the "Other" and that

one's perception of culture and literature is filtered by sexual behaviors and preferences. Those perceptions are not the same as those of gay men or of nongay women, whether the writers speak of gay or feminist issues or whether the writers choose to look at nongay figures from a lesbian perspective. The role of this series is to create space and give a voice to those interested in lesbian studies. This series speaks to any person who is interested in gender studies, literary criticism, biography, or important literary works, whether she or he is a student, professor, or serious reader, for it is not for lesbians only or even by lesbians only. Instead, *The Cutting Edge* attempts to share some of the best of lesbian literature and lesbian studies with anyone willing to look at the world through our eyes. The series is proactive in that it will help to formulate and foreground the very discipline on which it focuses. Finally, this series has answered the call to make lesbian theory, lesbian experience, lesbian lives, lesbian literature, and lesbian visions the heart and nucleus, the weighty planet around which for once other viewpoints will swirl as moons to our earth. We invite readers of all persuasions to join us by venturing into this and other books in the series.

Adventures of the Mind by Natalie Clifford Barney is the first complete and annotated English translation of what many critics consider her finest work. While several biographies of Barney have made her one of the most popular lesbians of the twentieth century, few have had the opportunity to see any of her literary accomplishments, for almost all her books were written in French and never appeared in her native language. Renowned as the lover of hundreds of women, Barney shines here as a witty friend and mentor, who welcomed the intellectuals of the world into her home. This volume represents one of many works that need to have a new life in English so that readers can judge for themselves the writer who won the devotion of so many men and women alike.

A Note on the Translation

Adventures of the Mind represents the first complete translation into English of Natalie Clifford Barney's initial volume of memoirs, *Aventures de l'esprit*, published in Paris in 1929. Ellipses in the text are hers, as are notes at the bottom of pages. In the chapters she devoted to English-speaking authors, such as Anna Wickham, Mina Loy, Djuna Barnes, and Gertrude Stein, Barney quoted at length, in French translations, from their works. For this edition, I cite appropriate passages in their original English versions. Entries in the Bibliography provide full information on their sources. Other English translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

To expand the reader's appreciation of Barney's milieu, annotations following the text seek to identify her friends and acquaintances, as well as her frequent references to literature, history, philosophy, and other disciplines. The initials "NCB" refer to Natalie Clifford Barney. On several occasions she quotes in English familiar expressions and short lines of poetry or prose; where necessary, the origins of these phrases appear in the notes. Some names, titles, and quotations have proved elusive and are so marked. The translator would appreciate assistance from readers in filling these lacunae; such help will be gratefully acknowledged in any subsequent edition of this work.

*To Philippe Berthelot
who remained faithful to literature*

Introduction

Karla Jay

For Berthe Cleyregue, her favorite book in English at last.

“A scholar’s heart is a dark well in which are buried aborted feelings that rise to the surface as arguments.” —Natalie Clifford Barney

Natalie Clifford Barney would not want me or anyone else to introduce *Adventures of the Mind*. She knew that “presenting something or someone accurately and without damaging his charm is perhaps what is most difficult in our human commerce” (128).¹ Barney was possibly forecasting her own fate, for the portraits of her, whether in words or oils, have tended to flatten her out by emphasizing her physical allure and charisma while devaluing her accomplishments. Without a doubt she was glamorous in an unusual way, with hair so blond that her friends swore she seemed to be always “covered in moonlight,” as Lucie Delarue-Mardrus so aptly put it, and eyes of “poetic blueness [with] . . . some gleams of steel blades” (138). She was also a woman of enormous passion and a lover of the many varieties of feminine

2 Introduction

beauty. Her relationships ranged from a half century with Romaine Brooks to less enduring liaisons with Renée Vivien, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, Colette, Djuna Barnes, and hundreds of other women. Despite her claim that indiscretion is “the principle of our truths revealed” (20), in this volume, she is oddly circumspect: The women I have named were indeed her lovers, but my source is not her portraits but the biographies detailing her sexual adventures.² Here, she omits whatever physical qualities might have been part of her attraction to these women in order to celebrate their intellectual accomplishments as well as her own enormous capacity for the cerebral joys of friendship with other women as well as men. She titled the book *Aventures de l'esprit* to underscore all the meanings of that charming French word *esprit* which means “mind, wit, spirit,” a word that is opposed to the idea of *corps* or body. And so her lovers and other female friends are placed on a rung with the men with whom she had only intellectual relationships. Opening her salon doors, she brings this stellar cast of talented people to us by letting us judge them for ourselves.

After paying tribute to two mentors—Oscar Wilde and Pierre Louÿs—Miss Barney, as many respectfully referred to her, invites us into the exclusive confines of 20, rue Jacob. First, we must travel down the winding and narrow streets of the St. Germain district. Sandwiched halfway between the trendy Boulevard St. Germain with its literary cafés (the Flore, Deux Magots) and the Seine with its stalls of books, we come upon the quaint rue Jacob. Her house is ironically situated on the block between the rue des Saints Pères (the “Street of the Holy Fathers”) and the rue Bonaparte. We would hardly expect to find a hotbed of lesbianism or feminist rebellion here. But behind the large black carriage doors of number 20, through the cobbled entrance, lies the home of Natalie Clifford Barney, a site she occupied from October 1909 until she was forced to move out in 1968 to the Hotel Meurice after she had lost her lease. She was by then in her early nineties, and most of the glittering habitués of her salon were long dead.

Had we been invited to Natalie Clifford Barney's salon in its heyday, we would have been struck immediately upon entry by her elegantly and tastefully furnished apartment. The walls are a modest shade of grey, except for some red velvet wallpaper, of the type so favored during the Victorian era, and a crystal chandelier sparkles in the dining room. A portrait of her friend Remy de Gourmont hangs on the wall, and mirrors enlarge the already generous space. But behind the house is the real treat, a Doric temple dedicated to friendship. Built in the early 1800s, it is cozy enough for an intimate reading to take place within, large enough for anti-war rallies to be held on its steps during World War I, dramatic enough to serve as the backdrop for outdoor plays and *tableaux vivants*. But since it rains more in Paris than in London and since the winter sky rarely reflects the blue of Natalie's eyes, we are likely to find ourselves inside the main building. We first help ourselves to some coffee or tea, a glass of orangeade, whiskey, or port, a piece of fruit and perhaps some of the tasty sandwiches and pastries created by Barney's housekeeper Berthe Cleyrergue. On one day we may discover a moist two-layer chocolate and vanilla cake favored by Romaine Brooks; on another, the fruit tarts of which Djuna Barnes was so fond. Only now are we ready for the real feast, the introduction to a community of intellectual aristocrats.

The mere existence of a salon run by an American upstart (albeit one with some French blood) was contrary to French etiquette, but then Natalie Barney had violated almost everything Americans valued as well, so the breach of French mores was relatively minor in comparison. Since several biographies of Barney exist, it is not necessary here to review her life at great length,³ but just remind ourselves that this daughter of Dayton, born on Halloween in 1876, had been a rebel from the beginning. Although she grew up in the best social sets of Cincinnati and later Washington and Bar Harbor, she virtually ignored the Victorian values espoused by the haute bourgeoisie. Educated by a French governess and then at Les Ruches in Fontainebleau, she felt more at home in France, where people tended to care

4 Introduction

less than Americans about the values of others, particularly the morals of foreigners. While still a teenager, she began to have female lovers, such as Evalina Palmer, and by the turn of the century she had seduced Liane de Pougy, the most famous courtesan of the Belle Epoque, and begun her celebrated relationship with Renée Vivien [Pauline Mary Tarn], the English-born poet. Almost thirty years before Radclyffe Hall published the apologetic *Well of Loneliness*, she was openly and unabashedly gay; in fact, she said that being a lesbian was a “perilous advantage” (*Perilous* 1). She wrote unambiguously Sapphic verse, such as *Quelques Portraits-Sonnets de femmes* (Some Portraits and Sonnets of Women, 1900). Once she came into her vast inheritance of over four million dollars (several billion by today’s standards), she felt she could live exactly as she chose. And she did.

The fact that Parisian salons had been primarily the domain of the French nobility (even though by the nineteenth century some members of the French and foreign haute bourgeoisie had made some inroads) did not deter her at all from having her own. Similarly, the lack of a title (like those of the Duchesse du Maine, the Marquise d’Alembert, Comtesse Diane, Duchesse d’Uzès, Princesse Mathilde—Napoleon’s niece, no less—and Comte Robert de Montesquiou) was of no consequence. With her American sense of entrepreneurship, she didn’t think it impudent to take over the reins that had once been held by the likes of Madame de Sevigné and Madame de Staël.

Of course, she couldn’t have done so without her financial wherewithal and without the historical fact of the Dreyfus Affair. Captain Alfred Dreyfus was arrested on 31 October 1894 under suspicion “of having handed the enemy confidential documents of little importance” (Weber, Foreword in Kleeblatt xxv). He was court-martialed and demoted at the end of 1894 and sent to rot on Devil’s Island in 1895 for the crime of treason, though many suspected—and Zola proclaimed it loudly in his famous pamphlet “J’Accuse”—that Dreyfus’s major crime was being of Jewish origin. His sentence, which his critics thought was too

light (they would have preferred the death penalty), and his subsequent exile turned out to be only the opening volley in a battle that tore all the threads of French society. "The division followed social class lines very little. One expects the aristocracy and much of the upper bourgeoisie to have been conservative and consequently anti-Dreyfusard. This seems to have been the case, but there were many exceptions—for example, in Geneviève Straus's salon" (Hoffman 145). Intellectuals, artists, writers, and scholars were found on both sides with figures like Émile Zola, Marcel Proust, Anatole France, Charles Péguy, the Reinach brothers (Salomon, Théodore, and especially Joseph), and André Gide lining up strongly as Dreyfusards while Charles Maurras, Paul Valéry, Edgar Degas, Maurice Barrès, Paul Bourget, José-Maria de Heredia, François Coppée⁴ were just as virulently anti-Dreyfus. Proust was said to have gotten into a duel over the issue, and a meeting of the Chamber of Deputies was disrupted by fisticuffs as the Comte de Bernis attacked Jean Jaurès, only to be pummeled by Gerault-Richard. Anti-Semitic riots and even pogroms broke out in the provinces and in Algeria. "The more or less anarchist, more or less socialist bohemian habitués of the Chat Noir and other Montmartre cabarets split. . . . Social life became a minefield" (Weber, Foreword in Kleeblatt xxv). Families were rent apart as in a civil war. A famous cartoon of the time in *Le Figaro* (14 February 1898) shows the family dinner of some well-dressed and coiffured members of the haute bourgeoisie or perhaps even the nobility sitting at a long dining room table. The caption in the first frame reads: "Absolutely, no talk of the Affair." In the second frame, the men are pummeling one another, a man is throttling a woman, chairs are flying through the air, and even the dog has entered the fracas. For this frame, the caption advises us, "They talked about it" (Kleeblatt 183, plate 54).

The salons were not immune to this split, and they divided into pro- and anti-Dreyfus camps, much as Proust depicts in *Remembrance of Things Past* (the Dreyfusard salon of Madame Verdurin and the opposing group at the Guermantes). In 1906

6 Introduction

Dreyfus was vindicated, but by the time Barney opened her salon in 1909 in the rue Jacob, the wounds had still not healed. Parisian society needed outsiders, preferably foreigners, who were either neutral or ignorant of the affair to host salons which would once more be politically neutral turf so that any battle within could be waged on the artistic front.

Natalie Barney fit the role perfectly. In 1894, she was still an adolescent spending most of her time attending social gatherings in Washington and Maine. She was Protestant and one-quarter Jewish (via the Pikes), but she was not a French Protestant or Jew, and this was an important distinction: Because she was an American-born lesbian, she was not going to marry into a French Catholic family (many of the anti-Dreyfusards were also profoundly anti-Protestant). As an outsider in every sense of the word, she offered no threat of disrupting French familial values from within. Her freedom to live as an open lesbian, for example, would not have been as benignly accepted had she been the daughter of a wealthy, upper-middle-class French family, for the French tended to watch their own daughters closely. She was an oddity of sorts, and one could expect—or condone—almost anything from the “Wild Girl from Cincinnati” as she was known. After all, Cincinnati, for all French people knew at that time, might have been part of the romantic, untamed Wild West, which lived on in the French imagination. In addition, Barney’s wealthy and prestigious American lineage helped her to attract all types and social classes to her salon, from members of the highest noble houses (for example, Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre) to poor but aspiring writers (such as Djuna Barnes). Gertrude Stein, who was both more bourgeois and more obviously identifiable as a Jew (Barney with her blond hair and blue eyes fit the Aryan stereotype perfectly) hosted the intellectual refugees of the world—Pablo Picasso, Jacques Lipchitz, Ernest Hemingway, and Sherwood Anderson, among others—but failed (or didn’t attempt) to attract *le beau monde* that filled Barney’s rooms.

Thus, in Barney’s salon, one might finally find Paul Valéry,

Charles Maurras, Anatole France, André Gide, and Salomon Reinach in the same room once again, united by their mutual interest in the arts. By praising Valéry in the same book as Proust, Barney makes an attempt to defuse the political past by transposing these men into a putatively apolitical present where they co-exist equally (if not always peacefully) in terms of their literary creations and their common relationship to her.

Barney's position on the Dreyfus affair and anti-Semitism in general is difficult to decipher. On one hand, in *Adventures of the Mind* she proclaims her Jewish ancestry with apparent pride. It was also common knowledge that her sister, Laura, who frequented the salon, had married a Jew named Dreyfus (unrelated to Alfred Dreyfus). Barney also includes portraits of two Jewish writers, Fleg and Zangwill. Although they were two popular authors of the 1920s, it would be difficult to argue that they are of the same stature as Gabriele d'Annunzio, Max Jacob, or any of the other men. Though Proust was partly Jewish (and rather Jewish-identified), he actually never came to the salon, and his appearance here serves a different purpose—frankly, name dropping. Lumping Fleg and Zangwill together in one chapter also has the unfortunate implication that Jewish writers have much in common, especially as Barney flits from Fleg to Zangwill and then back to Fleg in a way that conflates their personalities and oeuvre into one stereotype.

Certainly, including them in this prestigious group portrait appears to be taking a very strong pro-Jewish position. She maintains this public posture in almost all of her published writings where the subject arises. Some anti-Semitic remarks do appear in her aphorisms. For example, in *Thoughts of an Amazon*, she asks, "A straightened Jewish nose: surgery, paraffin or mixed ancestry?" (quoted in and translated by Livia 3).

Barney's private feelings are more complicated. In one of her unpublished memoirs, she denounced some acquaintances who rushed out of a tennis match to hear the Dreyfus verdict in Rennes ("Memoirs" 169),⁵ but this account was written much later, probably in the 1940s, and may be a revisionist recreation

8 Introduction

of what she actually thought at the time. Since it might also be the case that the Dreyfus verdicts were cataclysmic events that people remembered in the way many Americans can instantly recall where they were when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Barney's recollection may indicate an absence of political consciousness even in her youth. Certainly, by World War II, Barney was firmly anti-Semitic, supporting Mussolini in the early 1940s from her wartime home near Florence. She blamed Churchill and the Jewish people for World War II, complained about the hardship the war had imposed on her (all the filet mignon had somehow disappeared), and indulged in repeating in her diaries the worst stereotypes about rich Jews who had somehow deserved a holocaust. She gave Ezra Pound his first radio and probably encouraged his broadcasts. She either forgot her Jewish roots or somehow failed to mention them anymore. Very little of this later anti-Semitic material has ever been published, though she handed her World War II diaries and memoirs along with her other material to the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet in Paris. Perhaps she knew on some level that her virulent anti-Semitism was either wrong or unspeakable, particularly by the time she died in 1972, and she must have made a decision somewhere along the way to omit most of this offensive material from her later published works.

Barney's rise and long reign as a salon hostess were indirect (and minor) consequences of the Dreyfus Affair; Barney merely capitalized on her position as an outsider to take a very public pro-Jewish position, which she seemed to flaunt a bit, like her lesbianism. But *Adventures* does have several items on its political agenda that are not merely reactive to or reflective of burning issues in French society. Barney warns us at the very beginning that "this book is a kind of statement of values" (21). Although once more those ethical considerations are not directly named, they include a belief that women writers, artists, and musicians are just as creative and talented as their male counterparts. Certainly, in her own lifetime, no woman (except Marie Curie) was deemed to be the equal of any man in the same discipline.

Nor had any woman been elected to the prestigious French Academy, the elysian field of immortal male writers, until eight years after Barney's death. Women were only represented in token numbers, if included at all, in the major museums and men preferred to see women as depicted by other men, whether on the page or on the canvas. Barney proposed to level the playing field, as it were, by flattening the mound from which the male writers declaimed their art and theory and raising women from ballgirls to key players. To accomplish this, she reversed the culturally gendered positions of the men and women she selected to apostrophize in *Adventures*. After sitting briefly on Oscar Wilde's lap, she places the rest of the men "very affectionately [but firmly] at . . . [her] feet" (40). Pierre Louÿs prefers her writing to Renée Vivien's; Remy de Gourmont writes two books devoted to his "Amazon" and ventures out of doors only for her; Proust writes her that "there is no one toward whom I have made as many advances of kindness . . . as much as toward you" (Letter VI, 64); Rilke tells her that an "insignificant" moment for her would have proved to be invaluable for him and later he is "heartbroken" over another missed appointment (70); Max Jacob understands she is simply his "dear ideal" (87); J-C. Mardrus would like her to bear his child; Paul Valéry owes his American audience to Barney's translation of his work. One might conclude from these accounts that Barney has either replaced Sappho as the tenth muse or has become an eleventh muse. Or perhaps her inspiration is so wide-ranging that she has managed to become all of the nine original muses at once. As a demi-goddess, she directs the thoughts and actions of great men so that she is not merely a passive source of inspiration: She is in control of their minds, and therefore, above them, dictating their very existence. At the end of all these portraits, one wonders where these men of letters would be without her.

She is not the kindest of goddesses either, nor is she a gentle Beatrice to whom great verses are dedicated. She dismisses Proust's many portraits of lesbians as "unrealistic" and implies that gay men know nothing of lesbians (67). She frankly admits

that she didn't understand Rilke's work while he was still alive. She doesn't have the highest opinion of her good friend Paul Valéry either: "Valéry is a prodigious artist but not a true poet" (113). The great men have been put quite firmly in their places.

Moreover, she reduces most of the men to their frailest human elements by referring constantly to their physical limitations. They are not gods at all but the most feeble human beings. For example, Pierre Louÿs's portrait does not focus on his provocative novels or his marvelous fraud, *The Songs of Bilitis*; instead, he is depicted in his old age as he wanders blindly about his library, pathetically handling books he can no longer read (44). Proust is comically exposed as the hypochondriac he was, as he repeatedly promises to leave his deathbed to meet the charming Miss Barney. When they finally do meet, Barney can hardly contain her boredom.⁶ She had "the impression that no one had ever had with him a moment of genuine exchange created by the immediate transfusion of thought" (63). Remy de Gourmont, a man of letters who was highly and widely regarded as one of the most eminent minds of his day, is almost dehumanized by Barney's detailed description of the ravages wrought on his face by lupus. The heroic Gabriele d'Annunzio is treated a bit more gently (perhaps because he was once Romaine Brooks's lover), but she cannot resist referring to the eye he lost in World War I.

The men turn out to be a tattered army of literati. It seems indiscreet, if not indecent, to so linger on the ailments of these great men, though she does it intentionally to humanize them. For traditionally, only the personal, physical life of *women* artists is discussed in public. Even today, talk-show hosts and print media interviews are many times more likely to ask a woman what her husband and/or parents think of a book/artistic installation/daring feat than to pose a similar question to a man. Women are personalized, familiarly addressed by their first names, and otherwise demeaned so that the public is intentionally distracted from their positions as artists, whereas men's lives remain secret, abstract, or sacrosanct unless they flagrantly affront public mor-

als. Thus, Barney intentionally reverses gendered protocol, making the men the victims of a stream of comments about their physical imperfections while the fact that none of the women writers seems to be afflicted by so much as a cold makes them seem stronger, superior, almost immortal. She discusses the women almost exclusively as artists and has generous praise for most of them. Anna Wickham's books are "wells of truth" (146).⁷ Colette is made into a goddess of sorts: she is "on a level with nature and above men" (152). Aurel's "work is full of splendid finds" (155) and Elisabeth de Gramont "is such a poet . . . that her quintessence has escaped lesser poets" (161). Barnes has the "extraordinary capacity . . . to capture social circles which she had every reason not to know" (168). Stein is the "Madame Curie of language. . . . [S]he has crushed thousands of tons of matter to extract the radium of the word" (172). And Romaine Brooks is no less than "the epitome, the 'flowery summit' of a civilization in decline, whose character she was able to capture" (180). The hyperbole is such that the reader will conclude that the least of these women is better than the greatest of the men she knows, though Barney never has to say so directly.

Because of this feminist *parti pris*, Barney allows the women to make harsh remarks about her whereas the men utter only praise. Her introductions by Aurel and Lucie Delarue-Mardrus have the irreverent tone of a roast. Allowing Aurel to introduce her is particularly audacious, since she was originally one of Barney's few enemies, perhaps because Aurel also ran a salon. Her presence in this book, along with Barney's kind comments about Charles Maurras and André Rouveyre, both of whom had publicly attacked her, serves to underscore her forgiving and generous nature.⁸ Aurel says that Barney is "guilty of insolence" and "is hard-to-please." She's definitely "not tender" (135). Barney's wit is "homicidal, it executes without moderation; it kills without discretion" (136). She overlooks the fact that the men have been the recipients of all the bullets. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus adds to the portrait by calling Barney "courageous, scornful, mysterious, subtle, grand, sophisticated, sardonic, aristo-

cratic" (139). It is not clear whether all of these were meant as compliments.

By allowing herself to be portrayed by others, she shows that she is a good sport, able to take a sharp jab as well as deliver one. The reproaches leveled at her, which she voluntarily includes in her own book, actually make her seem more human, more fun, and especially more desirable than the frigid muse the men make her out to be. The criticism creates an important counterbalance to the self-deification of the first section. Or perhaps she is an unattainable goddess and mentor to men and a mysterious but very affable lover to women. How Barney fended off dozens of male suitors while attracting hundreds of female lovers becomes all too clear. And depending on whether one is a male or female reader, one will be either humbled or seduced by her presence. Some, of course, may be offended by the flamboyant self-aggrandizement in this work, but they will perhaps come to agree with Barney that part of the purpose of running a literary establishment is to be able to bask in the reflected glow of the achievements of one's guests.

It is important to note that this agenda was not "feminist" in the contemporary sense of the word. As I pointed out in *The Amazon and the Page*, Barney saw her definition of feminism as applying to an elite group of women who were her social equals. The few exceptions, like Djuna Barnes, gained entry when their talent superseded their lack of class and financial wherewithal. Salons, in and of themselves, are inherently elitist. In order to have a true salon, in which a veritable intellectual exchange can transpire, the habitués must be peers—that is, they must all be creative persons. Salons encourage a literary and financial hierarchy contrary to feminist tenets. Today, we would find it abhorrent to exclude anyone because of financial or artistic limitations. As a result, there are no truly feminist literary salons in the United States (34–35), for the very term is oxymoronic. Barney would have felt a literary salon would be impossible to form in the United States, where "conversation has been replaced by

superlatives—as tea by alcohol—consequently ‘salons’ are apt to become saloons” (“My country” 69).

Despite the circumscribed nature of Barney’s feminist goals for her salon, they still did not succeed, as is obvious by how well known the names of Valéry, Proust, Gide, Rilke, Wilde, d’Annunzio, and Anatole France are. Each of these men has been inscribed in the Western European canon whereas even Colette, Barnes, and Stein are still on the fringes.

Even Barney’s less-threatening agenda met with little long-term success. With her American Protestant roots, she tended to view the arts with the eye of a practiced capitalist. The age of great patrons, like the Medici, Louis XIV, or Queen Elizabeth I was long over. Prizes last generally for one year or are given for one work; after that, the artist is as poor as ever. Barney believed that all wealthy people have a stake in supporting the world’s “intellectual wealth” (117). In this book, she comes up with the unique idea of selling stock in artists, at 500 francs a share, with each artist going for 15,000 francs. The shareholder would mine a mind instead of something like coal. She asks, “Isn’t it rather the purview of this new type of stockholder to speculate on intellects than on other, equally mysterious commercial enterprises?” (118). If a shareholder wishes to give up his or her role, then he or she would have to find a suitable replacement. The major reward would be in having more wonderful works of art in the world, but shareholders would also get limited editions, a chance to own the original manuscript or musical score.

The sum of 500 francs for most of Barney’s circle would have been a pittance, but an artist could have lived quite well in those days on 15,000 francs. Paul Valéry, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Djuna Barnes all benefited from Barney’s clever and generous efforts, and along with Romaine Brooks, Barney subsidized George Antheil’s *Ballet mécanique*. She was not the type of woman who would ask others to do what she was unwilling to do herself. The recent restrictions imposed by major governmental granting agencies in the United States and in England make Barney’s idea

all the more appealing. In the current climate, would not organized private underwriting of the arts serve a useful purpose?

Barney's matronage of the arts was also emotionally and intellectually supportive. *Adventures of the Mind* highlights her finest achievement, the creation of the Académie des Femmes (the Academy of Women), which she began in 1927 as a counterpart to the all-male Académie-française. Barney wanted to create a corrective to this patriarchal bastion more than thirty years before the esteemed "Immortals" got around to doing so on a token basis.

And so the idea of an Academy of Women was born. Barney held a "Friday" for each of the women in the second half of the book, and the portraits originally served as introductions for the guests of honor. The women, in turn, would read from unpublished manuscripts or works in progress. The celebration for Gertrude Stein, whom Barney had met the previous year, took place on 4 February 1927 and included a performance by Virgil Thomson, who "sang his settings of the Stein pieces 'Susie Asado' and 'Preciosilla'" (256, note 1). The women would not only share their newest and best material with the other guests, but they also received important critical feedback for their work. Writing is a lonely profession, and by the time the newspaper critics tell a writer the truth about her work, it's too late to change it! Others received financial backing; for example, Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* was published when members of the academy bought pre-publication subscriptions to pay for printing costs. In turn, Barnes gave some of them hand-colored copies of the work.

There were two women writers, however, to whom Barney owed a great deal in terms of inspiration, but by 1927 they were dead. Barney didn't think it was too late to thank them, so she held retrospective posthumous celebrations for Renée Vivien and Marie Lenéru. Vivien and Barney had tried to set up a colony for poets on Lesbos in 1904. Although the venture failed, the idea remained in Barney's mind and resurfaced as the Academy of Women. It was also Renée Vivien who inspired most of Barney's work, including *The One Who Is Legion*, "The Woman

Who Lives with Me,” and numerous poems that relate various aspects of Barney’s tumultuous love affair with Vivien. Without Vivien, the naturally lazy Barney might not have striven to write more than a volume or two of sonnets and some aphorisms, which she liked to call *pensées* and “scatterings.”

Marie Lenéru had a political influence of Barney’s life. Lenéru was a political theorist and a woman of great courage, who in spite of being deaf and partially blind from scarlet fever, became a highly respected playwright and activist. Lenéru’s vociferous opposition to the popular World War I inspired Barney to hold anti-war meetings at the Temple of Friendship, when many of her friends, including Romaine Brooks, Radclyffe Hall, and the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre were either driving ambulances or supporting the war effort in other ways (Jay, “The Amazon Was a Pacifist” 101–5).

The fact that Lenéru, Wickham, Rachilde, Aurel, Mina Loy, Vivien, Delarue-Mardrus, Elisabeth de Gramont, Djuna Barnes, and even Barney herself were virtually forgotten by the time Barney’s salon closed in 1968 suggests that the task of sustaining a women’s culture was too great for even one brilliant salon hostess to undertake alone. Each of these writers was unusual—hence threatening—in her own way; therefore, the heteropatriarchy tried to erase each one of them, and almost succeeded until the second wave of women’s liberation resurrected interest in almost all of them. The lack of availability of many of the works created by these writers—for much of Aurel, Loy, Rachilde, Lenéru, Vivien, and Barney is still out of print—is ample warning to all of us that if we don’t support our writers and artists, we will deprive future generations of the works we love.

In Barney’s efforts, her ideas were bolder and more original than her actual literary execution of them, but her salon was the one concept that was as breathtaking and extraordinary in practice as it still is in the imagination of the many who would have loved to have attended it. *Adventures of the Mind* takes us for a brief visit within the rarified air of Barney’s salon for a few hours so that

we may mingle with some of the writers and artists we love and find new friends to take home with us. It's time to settle down with a cup of tea in a velvet chair bathed in soft light and embark on some witty, charming encounters with a few guests carefully selected for our benefit by our caring and captivating hostess, Natalie Barney.

Notes

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1. All quotations from *Adventures of the Mind* throughout my introduction have been taken from the Catton translation in this volume.
2. See George Wickes, *The Amazon of Letters: The Life and Loves of Natalie Barney* (1976) and Jean Chalon, *Portrait of a Seductress: The World of Natalie Barney* (1979).
3. For additional information, see Karla Jay, *The Amazon and the Page: Natalie Clifford Barney and Renée Vivien* (1988).
4. Anatole France, Bourget, Heredia, and Coppée were members of the Académie-française.
5. She was probably referring to the annulment of the Rennes verdict by the Court of Appeals on July 12, 1906.
6. This portrait of devotion is a bit undermined by his not even knowing her real name: he refers to her as "Mlle Clifford" (64).
7. Barney employs a common French saying here in which truth is depicted as a woman coming out of a well.
8. In *Le Romantisme féminin* (1926), Charles Maurras blamed Barney for Renée Vivien's death. In *Le Reclus et le retors: Gourmont et Gide* (1927), André Rouveyre accused Barney of having led Gourmont on. Note that both works were published not long before the original appearance of *Adventures de l'esprit*, so that her kind remarks seem particularly generous.

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1. *Forewarning*

“What are you preparing?”

I’m always startled when someone asks me this question, because I’m not preparing anything. Things prepare themselves slowly within me. I have no more desire to read than to write, but I allow this little bit of writing to trace, on bare skin, a unique tattoo.

Every ten years, I force myself to empty my notebooks, the drawers of my writing desk. What they contain becomes books, almost without my knowing.

This current work is a debt of conscience to a public which is at least as interested as I in my correspondence. On its behalf I therefore cull my files for these ripe celebrities, some of whom are so ripe they no longer seem to belong to me. Are they still their own masters?

I am so disorganized that I ought to put in a vault these literary valuables that have “fallen into the public domain.” It would be a crime to let them get lost, stolen, or burned. So I am employing that other means of destruction: I am publishing them.

“What about discretion?”

What is this commonplace to me?

Indiscretion has always seemed to me to be one of the privileges of tact.

Far from fearing or despising indiscretion, I find that only in it is the principle of our truths revealed.

With me, indiscretion is an act of faith!

No doubt an excess of contrary practices justified Wilde's remark that memoirs "are generally written by people who have either lost their memories, or have never done anything worth remembering."¹

I do not intend to spread the epidemic of memoirs. I reveal certain aspects of kindred writers, the literary adventures of an amazon. The best hunting one can pursue in the city in the wintertime is that of the mind. The attraction that others' minds exercises on us prompts these encounters, as well as the resulting conflicts.

If I go too far, if I exceed this privilege of indiscretion in the name of a literary honesty to which I have an obligation, I apologize but recant nothing, just like the novice who, unused to weapons, nevertheless succeeds in wounding his enemy: "Oh! pardon me," he says, in giving it another try.

Politeness, the mask behind which truth subtly takes refuge, leaves me exposed as soon as I pick up my pen. The pen becomes a lance with which I charge on those nearest me. I charge even on the dead, but which of us, living, is as defended, as beset, as ill beset?

If the commemorative works multiply and the lectures abound as soon as a great artist has died, thus enriching our literary heritage, it is because our misunderstandings now have free rein. The artists can no longer censure our praise or defend themselves against our criticism. The personality splinters under this kind of publicity. And their image is erected out of platitudes, which confirm their glory, at the expense of true likeness. The works remain, but, in the commercialization of a mind, the parasites often win out; they cart it away piece by piece. That is how Nietzsche was built up by them into an apostle of Prussianism (see the cover of his book *Ecce Homo* in 1914), how the French Revolution is attributed to the encyclopedists and even to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sovietism to Tolstoy and Gorki, Hindu

discontent to Tagore.² . . . Soon Christ will become the spiritual representative of the anarchist leagues.

These days, everything is made to serve, and nothing so much as the artist, who, innocent of all purpose outside of his art, serves unwittingly. That is how revolutions are attached to those who are never attached to revolutions. Because, in fact, isn't a name more necessary as a pretext for destruction than a city?

If a Lamartine, a d'Annunzio finds himself smitten with action, it is because the action came up to him, because it sought him at his table.³ After all, didn't he perhaps help in its preparation? I hold to no idea, and, consequently, none holds me, nor restricts me, to itself. "That's true," one might conclude, despairing of one's cause, causes having less a hold on me than anything else. And these people who change sides astonish me, as if the most astonishing thing was not that they had any side at all! To choose is to lie to oneself about what one has not chosen, or to regret it!

Stendhal says that precautions are infinitely necessary to avoid lying.⁴ I have taken this precaution to the utmost, without departing greatly from the courtesy which, especially when one is armed, regulates play.

If I often say only what I do not wish to say, if my thought comes to light in a flash of steel, I apologize for that, but prefer its integrity.

Furthermore, this book is a kind of statement of values, a last will with codicils, in which I let those friends therein named find surprises, either pleasant or unpleasant, but each mention contains—if not my entire thought—at least that particle of thought on each of them which I have to bequeath at this time.

Their presence has always constrained me from making these declarations in private. Anything difficult to say must be shouted from the rooftops.

I am walking there like a somnambulist, my own voice waking me with a start. My courage falters and I am left with the unpleasant balance of fear.

Fear of what? Fear fully exists only when it cannot be given a

name. Children, we are going to touch the curtain that conceals nothing.

The blank page is one of the faces of fear. That it may be exorcised, the page becomes garrulous with all this black saliva.

If I have left out many of those friends who are either dear or detestable to me, it is because at the time I was writing I forgot them or they were out of touch with me: neither dead nor present. I have occasionally lost friends, my friends have never lost me. In matters of friendship, I am very lazy. Once I give my friendship, I don't take it back.

Distances should have been measured before approaching and not after. But haven't we all made these errors in perspective? And the law of least effort is certainly not to love one's fellow-creatures.

Not at all happy with my neglect of those who are excluded, I have already begun to think about those to whom I have not yet rendered justice.

Thus far, I have written only about my sympathies. Suppose I embarked upon the chapter about my aversions?

In my book *Autres pensées d'une amazone* (Further Thoughts of an Amazon), will I write about "young people"?⁵

Will I write about their youth in decay, mummified by drugs, or preserved like a fetus in alcohol in the glass bottles of bars? Will I write about them in proportion to their insignificance, magnified by their literary inheritances; or by that perilous leap which caused them to drop into the place of one of their "departed" elders, cut down before his time—fortunately for them? Well, let them now thrive and "depart" in their turn, or, if they know how to make the most of such a situation, then let them manage to deserve it.

Let us salute those who, through native excellence put to the hard test of time, are propelled by their own force and transcend time.

I will bother with them, because they bother me.

I will confront them, I will summon them to meet me in single combat. I will break lances against them or for them, who

knows? I will even lay down my arms before certain of them. In these adventures of the mind, I am also willing to be victim. Haven't I written, in the purifying excitement of a defeat:

Your cruelty: diamond against diamond.
You work raw flesh into the pure matter
Of a star, its waters become iridescent under the assault.
More colorful than the rainbow whose promise lies.

Cut the transparency and the sparkle
Of these deep crystals, enlarge the facets.
Form, sharpen, and reveal to my secret springs
The coldness of my flames and my clear movement.

This eye of Lucifer will be my talisman,
Let it be worn on our foreheads, let it gleam in our darkness.
Propose to our mind some new algebra
Of life, angel captured in this carnal romance.
Scorn the pleasure and its easy magnet,
For Love, the only charm of an unyielding soul.
This peril of brightness threatens the routine
Of bliss or of renunciation.

Magic name, without end or beginning!
Child's play to write it on windowpanes,
Carving the hard stone where its prism seeks birth,
Melting it in a sad shower between the lover's eyelashes.

I no longer know to whom I wrote that. We live terribly quickly from thought. The spirit blows where it will. Accused of intellectual Don Juanism, I wouldn't know how to pardon in others my own lack of constancy. However:

Mark, but mark indelibly,
The being deserving of being.
Be the woman who penetrates

Beneath the surface, and carves herself
In the mind's sap
On which your name feeds:

The cerebral impression
Expands just as
The tree and the initial grow.

The mind accepts with greater difficulty and rejects with greater ease than the heart. Its weights and measures are affected by a mere shadow.

If one is surprised that the author intrudes so often into these pages, it is because these adventures of the mind develop necessarily in encounters of two people. Like other adventures, these have their dangerous liaisons, their attempts at understanding, their intrigues, their variants of infidelity, their quarrels of pride and even of love.

While they do not unfold on a passionate stage, they do not have any less a field of action on which to measure their incompatibility of mood.

In love, everything becomes a pretext for the increase of love. But, in these more complex attractions, where the mediating flesh plays no role, there are mysterious desertions without farewells, divorces without grounds, hidden suspensions in mid-air, where those who are caught in our magnetism fall from our sphere. The laws of attraction are changed by unfavorable currents. Union through thought is the most difficult of unions. Since it is not welded by any helpful practice, everything is constantly called back into question. And the questions and answers pursue one another without ever catching one another. "There are no hatreds except the hatreds of the mind." And is love only a truce granted to our differences? But fellowship through the mind has at times also seemed more real to me than the merely physical.

Let us not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments.⁶

But, without limiting ourselves to this means of reconciliation with our fellow-men, let us confirm its excellence in passing, because everything is in passing to those who give themselves to the hunt.

And, straddling two centuries, who would have more right to ride them than I, an amazon?

“To intrude into your story.”⁷

In coming from the United States to live in France, I was only returning to some of my dearest origins.*

Even the male line of my ancestors, although Anglo-American, was not foreign to France.†

* My great-great-grandmother was French. During the Revolution she took refuge in America, where she married “Honest Judge Miller,” who, with his French father-in-law, negotiated the treaty by which France ceded Louisiana to the United States.⁸

This great-great-grandmother, who had little interest in politics, only took care of her home and herself, and in the rough America of former days, filed her nails with small pieces of ground glass. A message from her husband informing her that “Lafayette is coming, get ready” was so elliptical that she believed it a warning of danger;⁹ she fled and hid herself, along with her children, the silver, and the slaves, leaving an empty, ramshackled house to receive the guest. [NCB note]

† Commodore Joshua Barney made four official visits to France between 1782 and 1815.¹⁰ The first time, at the age of twenty-four, he came as the bearer of documents for Benjamin Franklin. He was presented to Queen Marie-Antoinette who, with her ladies in waiting, embraced the envoy from the New World in his person. (Count O’Leary, from the Irish brigade, no doubt jealous of these favors shown to the young American officer, composed a bantering song about him with this doubly disrespectful refrain:

“Barney, leave the girls alone.”¹¹

The following year, as commander of the *George Washington*, he called at France with Paul Jones.¹²

Next, accompanying James Munro¹³ [*sic*;] to Paris, he of the *Munro Doctrine*, Joshua Barney was part of the mission by which “the minister of the United States sends the flag of the United States to be placed in the lap of the Convention, as evidence of the union of these two nations.”¹⁴ The homage was received with applause. The president gave the fraternal embrace and the Convention again requested that the Committee of Public Safety employ Captain Barney. (Deposit in the Archives of the French Republic, Fructidor, Year II.)¹⁵

The last to leave the American navy, he then found himself transferred to the French navy, and he fought for it and became a commodore. After eight years of active service, he submitted his resignation, which Napoleon refused; but it was

But the homecomings, especially after several centuries, bring back something of the foreigner, which resembles an intrusion comparable to a tidal wave that runs against the current of the Seine and jostles the small boats that are too tightly attached to the banks.

On the other hand, the French mind, "this stream of sweet water crossing the bitter seas,"¹⁶ brings its effluvia and its well-being as far as my country, where, more and more, thanks to this contact, to this warm influence, an understanding flows in and continues to carry its benefits, at least the literary ones! All free exchange is beneficial to our mutual circulation. After this transfusion of blood imposed by two wars, shouldn't we remain near relations at all costs?

Our age, with its resistance to heroism, after exerting an effort beyond human strength, exercises with good reason a scrupulous detachment from sorrows vainly suffered, and from their recompense.

Our age, this decent clod, does not wear its decorations because it does not like to remain frozen in an attitude, obliged to transcend itself and its comforts, in order to resemble some commemorative statue. One does not long distract a Frenchman from what amuses him.

It is even surprising that forty of their number continue the tradition, move with the same majestic bearing, and agree to

accepted in 1802 with a pension which he declined, because he would have preferred to have returned to him important sums that he had deducted from his own fortune and from that of others to save the island of Santo Domingo, etc. (See the Navy Archives.)¹⁷ He returned to Europe for the last time in 1815 and died as a consequence of his wounds four years after the Battle of Bladensburg, where, with determination, he defended the Capital of Washington, which presented him with a sword as a token of its gratitude.¹⁸ He was buried with military and masonic honors because he was equally a patriot, a Francophile, and a Freemason.

His descendant, my cousin Colonel J. P. Barney, distinguished himself in the recent war in which he won la Croix de Guerre and la Légion d'Honneur, and a safe life. A life which he passed on to a son who will no doubt continue both these military and French traditions. [NCB note]

wear that garment, that drawing-room sword, which gives them the air of a foreign ambassador, ridiculous trappings, to be sure, but not undistinguished!¹⁹

To be the product of a conflict between merit and interest has always seemed to me not a very French ambition. Let everything that happens to us happen readily, rather than by the law of supply and demand.

Here, then, are some unintentional prefaces which have nothing preconceived, nothing made-to-order about them (so true is it that sentiments at times can be countermanded, but never commanded!). I have preferred to present my correspondence with various lettered people of our age. This correspondence seems to sum up them and me with greater spontaneity and, if it is possible, with even greater sincerity than any other introduction.

A great deal of discrimination is necessary in the exhibition of this intimate gallery of writings.

Should I permit the expression of a feeling to outlive the feeling that prompted it? Should I keep the letter that authenticates it? Should I fix it thus in its fidelity? . . . give it an after-life? or, like the Japanese wife who ought not outlive her usefulness, make it disappear? Should I burn this or that letter but save the letters of so-and-so? And if family members are opposed to their publication, they thus deprive themselves of the only opportunity of knowing the vanished celebrity better.

I have nothing but praise for the kindness of those who protect the posthumous rights of Marcel Proust, of Rilke, of Pierre Louÿs, and I thank them. If the several living persons, whose letters I quote here, have allowed me to chastise my modesty thus, I hope to create no unpleasant precedent where they are concerned. Every lady has received highly flattering letters from her contemporaries, and has known how to take them, just as I do, with that grain of salt which only increases their piquancy. But wouldn't it be a shame if too much modesty or too many scruples deprived us of ever knowing their intimate thoughts?

This half-line from the eighteenth year of Barrès:

“. . . the masters whom I hate”

or his revolt when a lady wished to employ his eagerness on small errands: “Love is not a staff of servants,” tells us more about his temperament than he has let show.²⁰

Besides, these are by no means letters from lovers—I cannot stress this distinction enough—and if they express feelings, it is rather of those who escape from love in order to develop themselves in more unexplored domains, which are like “disputed territories.”

So, with a little damage to intimacy, I begin my adventures of the mind.

Part One

2. *First Adventure: Oscar Wilde in the United States*¹

My first adventure of the mind took place in a resort near the Atlantic, when I, hardly out of diapers, ran across a hotel room to escape a pack of vacationing children. Among the empty chairs awaiting an event there was but a single figure. He lifted me out of my terrified course to his considerable height. I was reassured by his eyes which had sympathetically witnessed my flight, by his hair which was as long as mine, and especially by his voice which swept me into a story.

As the two of us sat together on a raised throne facing the arriving public, he never stopped astonishing me; and even when my mother, who had been searching for me, lifted me from his knees, all the while apologizing for us, he finished his tale with compliments on my paleness, my lace dress, and my precious attention.

When I learned, as an adolescent, that my friend had just been imprisoned in England, I wrote to him at Reading Gaol,² hoping to comfort him as he had comforted me, reminding him of his marvelous protection of me against the pursuits of other little people.

But did he ever receive my letter?

3. *Pierre Louÿs circa 1900*¹: *Literary Beginnings*

The stem of a *y* on the *i* in Louÿs
Goes off with blue ink to align his irises.

His hand with its beautiful penmanship had just given us *Aphrodite* (which I read while still a child beside a swimming pool in Bar Harbor).² This book, complete with illustrations, was left in our hands by our hostess, the mother of three sons. We learned that the edition had been seized upon its arrival in New York. A short time after returning to France, I discovered the *Chansons de Bilitis* (Songs of Bilitis). I had returned with a manuscript of verses in one hand and a manuscript of prose in the other. The book of verse found a publisher, Ollendorff, but my book of prose, *Lettres a une connue* (Letters to a Woman I Have Known), alarmed him, perhaps justly.³ Indignant, I wrote to the defender of “young women of the future society,” who replied: “I will get your book published, however daring it may be.”⁴

Nothing distinguishes one being from another more than his eroticism, his delicacy in wielding it, his discretion—extreme

discretion. Everything else is only pornography, and the pornography of badly lived and poorly expressed eroticism.

Pierre Louÿs, who was no mystic when it came to love, surely preferred “Latin games and Greek pleasures” to the exaggerated preoccupations of “damned women”⁵ who, with their sense of sin, perhaps unconsciously sought to heighten and increase their passions through imaginary perils.

By a strength of nature and art, the author of *Songs of Bilitis* shows us a succession of liaisons that are sufficiently captivating and complicated in themselves to require no alloys, something which does not happen without the presence of a certain purity.

Pierre Louÿs, preoccupied with form, shut himself up too quickly within its limits.

Love, even if relieved of its purpose (a riddance which he would have found painful), is, however, able to lend itself to infinite variations.

Didn't Baudelaire dream of and obtain “the friend with hips,” the companion who is not a mistress, “Hippolyte, dear sister”?⁶
But

From childhood admitted to the black mystery
Of unrestrained laughter mingled with somber tears,⁷
what role would he have played if he had not so powerfully revealed
himself a poet?

Vigny, less understanding in a revolt which wants nothing from him, but which, nevertheless, elicits his most beautiful poem, finds “always this companion whose heart is not sure,” and complains of “Woman, sick child and twelve times impure” with a resentment that seems to forget its origins.⁸ But doesn't this poet always claim her, through the angel of Eloa, in order to find her at last, at least in this verse:⁹

You alone seemed to me what one always searches for.

Lamartine, in his curious *Jocelyn*, and Théophile Gautier, in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and especially Balzac, in *Séraphitus-*

Séraphita [*sic*], have skirted, at the risk of perdition, these androgynous who have given a novelty to the human comedy.¹⁰

I went to the home of M and Mme Pierre Louÿs, on the boulevard Malesherbes.¹¹ I was struck by the gentleness of manners of this violator of morals, by his shock of chrysanthemum brown hair, by his hearty handshake, worldly and old-fashioned, and by the grievances he seemed to suffer.

He entrusted each of us—I was accompanied by Renée Vivien who was then preparing her first book of poetry¹²—with a deluxe edition of *Songs of Bilitis*, in which he inscribed this line from Keats, cut in half:

Forever wilt thou love
And she be fair.¹³

He took my manuscript, which was a novel based on a true story and which had been recopied by the learned, intelligible hand of the professor whom Jules Cambon had obtained for me: Charles Brun.¹⁴ One may wonder if I had blushed to entrust such a document to him. The fire of my mission as a writer had overruled my maidenly modesty.

Mademoiselle,

You had written me a furious letter and I was wrong to point out to you that I keenly resented the injustice. Without your knowledge, and unable to keep you informed about my steps, I have been working mightily for you to obtain what you desired; but efforts which do not materialize are but nought, and I must express my regrets to you.

As is, your novel *cannot* be printed. Rest assured that it is altogether impossible. I would like for you to show it to a hundred people so that you will not doubt my opinion. The man on the street could tell you differently, but not one publisher will contradict me.

So, what's to be done? Destroy it? Certainly not. It contains some pages "which don't work," as we say in literary slang, some letters in which your poetic feeling expresses itself in terms that

are a little old-fashioned, overused by bad poets, and thus discredited, do you understand? But against this, there are so many sentences that are excellent and even *admirable* that your text cannot be meddled with by a strange hand. Perhaps the best solution would be for you yourself to do it over . . . Or, indeed, if you are tired of it, have it published as a private edition in America (it is always possible to do it if it is in French) and send your book to all the people whose taste interests you. But do not destroy it, that would be murder.

In any event, continue to write, and be ambitious. You will be famous, I am sure of it.

Your respectful reader,

Pierre Louÿs

May I ask for your address over there?

Mademoiselle,

Here are your friend's verses. They are beautiful; however, I still like yours better and I thank you for the volume that you so kindly have sent me.¹⁵ It contains some great and powerful pages.

How deplorable it is that you left so quickly. I was able neither to see you nor even to write you during the month of arduous confinement when chance wished that I make your acquaintance. I am very sincerely sorry about that. Here are several hasty responses made at random to your questions: 1. You would do much better to give your book to an American printer than to a Belgian. The publications from Brussels have given us too many dirty novels, as well as too many grossly merry ones. —2. I will be only too happy to write you a preface if you accept the idea of rewriting your book in a slightly different form, as true as it is now but in appearance less copied from living characters. You can do it. If you were again to remain in Paris I would tell you how. —3. Never again offer me the slightest farthing on this matter; we would be angry. —4. Isn't the author of the verses I am sending you the character who delivers you a rose through a friend toward the middle of your novel?¹⁶ You

ought to write your story and hers. It is the first indispensable chapter in your complete novel. Do you want to write it and send it to me from over there? Since you trust me, I will quite voluntarily offer you an "outline" for this book which you must definitely redo because it is very good.

Your respectful,

Pierre Louÿs

And who would be a better advisor than he who published and observed this strict theory of poetry:¹⁷

The blank page should always be mysterious. . . .

Follow the rhythm that beats with the heart of the idea. Fundamental rule of poetry. And of prose. And of music.

Scan the prose. A well-written page is one from which not one syllable should be removed without upsetting the meter of the sentence.

Punctuate between the key words.

Notice that rhythm is not the only thing affected, but that obscure sonorities are illuminated, if the tardy pen tactfully introduces a comma.

At dawn, when the task is finished . . . Understand.

Accomplish.

Close your eyes only in hopes of dreaming: supreme murmur of the interior voice.

Hereafter, towards the manuscripts, towards the book, through life even to the grave . . . Scruples, but prudent ones, in the retouching.

Whether in structured or free verse, poems are creatures; which live; which breathe; which are full of organs; which die from a cut word.

Poets, evangelists of an intimate goddess, be transfigured by night

. . .

The verb alone is renowned.

No pride on your heads. Chase even the glory away from your house. Silence all around you. Solitude. Self-respect.

Especially self-respect! Swear that she holds you firm. Swear that she is incorruptible, that she arms you forever against poverty, love and death!

Pierre Louÿs, become single once more, let his beard grow again—a beard that is less handsome than his friend Claude

Farrère's,¹⁸ that giant with a dwarf's voice, a voice that later had to unite in true marriage with the contralto of Henriette Rogers — thinking that, hidden behind his hairy half-mask, he would distinguish among the friends who came to him those whom he wished to acknowledge or not acknowledge. To the latter he seemed to say:

“You are mistaken, it is not I.”

Pierre Louÿs, his chosen friends, and I, gave ourselves to so many childish actions that we seemed once more to recover in ourselves some resurgence of a youth that we had neglected to exhaust in our youth.

After a birthday dinner for my thirty-first October,¹⁹ there were the Hallowe'en games which were played on this prophetic night in the United States, and which Paul Claudel (who joined us that evening) also knew.²⁰ In the most prophetic of them, a long apple peel was thrown over the shoulder, forming on the ground the predestined initial.

With our eyes closed, I tested the subtlety of our senses by touching the fruit on the table, or by smelling four kinds of roses to distinguish the four different colors, always through the little night of the eyelids.

Little did I suspect that this exercise would soon become a necessity for one of us, and that Pierre Louÿs would no longer receive life directly through his eyes, but through other senses, all the sharper from having to share the deficiency of one of their number.²¹

No one put more spirit into our games than Philippe Berthelot. Astonished, I asked him how he managed to have so hardy a fantasy after his days of exhausting toil at the Ministry. He modestly explained: “I never let my nervous system get involved. And then I do not need sleep.” Héléne Berthelot added nuance to this remark with the smile of a privy diplomacy.

Diverted from our objective games toward tests of memory, he and Pierre Louÿs corrected a sonnet in my *Mallarmé* (an N.R.F. edition).²²

Another evening, after listening to a flute, with its thrills and spins, coming from my cold conservatory, Pierre Louÿs composed this quatrain:

Noctv Renata

Her eyes did not want me to wait for them,
The shadow entwined with the green wall trellis told me.
Listen. Here, the flute exhales an air so pure
That tonight an Orpheus became Eurydice.²³

P. L.

Listening to a flute, whose
name was writ on shadow
in Miss N.C.B.'s veranda.²⁴

Mme Pierre Louÿs de Heredia had begged me to use my influence to get him to smoke less, to agree to a lamp for his work, and to give up the chandelier, a midnight sun that tires his eyesight.²⁵

A long time after their separation I repeated to him this mark of solicitude. Being more hermetically sealed than an Anglo-Saxon, he did not want to betray any uneasiness, but the post-humous revelation of this kindness nevertheless affected him, since he forgot the argument that this parenthesis happened to interrupt, and he stammered for a moment, pitifully.

Another example of this discretion: I offered to send him my car so that he could accompany the Countess Sabini, since Far-rère, her *cavalier servant*, had to go to my house directly.²⁶ When he refused I realized that he wanted to spare his friend's touchiness, while at the same time avoiding a temptation that he judged disloyal; he was refusing to shake the dice of fate.

"A roll of the dice will never abolish chance."²⁷

And willing to gamble with fate, I risked my happiness in hopes of making a more interesting game, in brusquely putting aside my habits, these halts, to escape to other projects where I would always have my share of self-sacrifice, of pain or intensity. Mental sadism? No, but a reckoning of pride: to want nothing to

do with any sentiment that might disintegrate. Defenses, chains have always struck me as an offense to those unions that owe their beauty only to the natural rivets of their attachment. Trying to keep someone who could as well or better belong to another has always seemed to me a tyranny with no style, where even passion degenerates and declines. I am not miserly with those who can do without me, nor with those whom I manage to do without.

And if the former are the only ones I've met, I find in this bitterness a taste of liberty, of a bouquet still rarer than in other communions. Love becomes a chore if it is not an apostolate. One owes oneself such tests. There are those who sacrifice themselves in order to avoid all pain, but may we never be able to love people so little as to be charitable to them! Rather let us thank those who reject us, who do not distract us!

One remains alone, but one remains oneself. And isn't this conquest worth as much as any other? I want nothing that is not inevitably mine.

In 1915, at the time of America's entry into the war, Pierre Louÿs wrote me this sympathy card:²⁸

The "vigil of Easter," on which I saw the best of my own die, you wrote those verses on our French dead, dear Miss N.C.B., which you do not even sign. Thank you for your letter on him, for your poem on them. You have twice touched the most respectful of your friends.

P. L.
Tuesday

Very dear friend,

I shall be delighted to receive all three of you the day after tomorrow, but what will I prepare in response to the pleasure that I await? The peace cookies are not edible. I know no one who can give me the secret address of a sugar merchant, and, without sugar, is there tea?

What shall I invent? What if I promised you some revelations on Bilitis? That's it. I shall tell you everything.

You will learn why she had thirteen barbarian bracelets. I shall show you the thirteenth. She gave it to me on 13 August 1894. How many thirteens! You will have no sugar. But you will learn everything.

Very affectionately at your feet.

Pierre Louÿs

By then he could scarcely see, but he still permitted no privilege for his infirmity. He always wrote his own letters, moved by a dexterity that habit and skill steered, with only an occasional slight scoria, as happens to printed proofs. I regret having to transmit these texts here, without his handwriting which made them like a natural illumination.

4 July

Dear Miss,

For forty-five days, I have cherished one of your letters above all others. You wrote me in cursive on 20 May; and I have not been able to answer it; it intimidated me. I do not recall ever having received two pages as simply *friendly* as this letter. Are you sure that your Temple de l'Amitié incenses only an allegory? Be wary of temples! I have always believed in Goddesses.

Paul Valéry is the friend to whom I dedicated my first book twenty-five years ago.²⁹ You know nothing about it because you were then a very little girl. But you have just read the *Jeune Parque* (The Young Fate) and you have felt that it is "a thing of beauty, a joy forever."³⁰ I was sure of it. Think it. Say so. And have a party for my oldest friend. He is a great poet.

He himself will tell you that I am ill and that I do not go out. That is not important. Listen to his poetry.

Your respectful and affectionate

Pierre Louÿs

Sunday morning

Do you know with whom I have just spent the night? You are the only one I can tell, and I hope that I did not disturb your dreams. It was with you.

From 11 p.m. until 7 a.m. I reread twenty letters from you and ten from Pauline.³¹

Pauline's are not appealing. But yours are delightful. I will not be able to go to bed without telling you this.

Under Pauline's violets³² I see a kind of instinctive defense against an imaginary ill will that prowls around and lies in wait for her. It shows itself in a surprising parsimony of expression. Hardly has she said her half-thought than she regrets it and takes it back. Her psychological portrait was done beforehand by D.G.R.³³

. . . the underlip

sucked in as if it strove to kiss itself.

I love this neuter *it*, that kiss is not human.

You, on the other hand, you were born having in your heart all that she lacked. You write with a heart as open as hers is closed. And you have generosity of word with a charming lack of worry about future ingratitude.

I now have a "certainty," as Pauline said concerning her reveries. And I do not dream. Her verses (which are very beautiful) are not confessions but illusions about herself. She had as much a consuming passivity as you are affectionate in the most active and most beautiful sense.

But I am bothered that you should listen while I think of you:

I am going to write the rest for myself alone.

Thank you for your dear friendship. All of mine does not deserve it.

Pierre Louÿs

Thursday you must have had a sad opinion of my thinking brain. I had not been to bed for the preceding two nights in

order to make my office fit for the reception of three poetesses, and I removed eight hundred volumes of poetry that had taken all the seats for as many libraries.³⁴ I did not conceal the extreme weakness of my conversational openings and endings. . . . As, on the contrary, I am getting better and better (aren't these eight pages of handwriting a proof of that?), I am going to embolden myself on the last point. What would you think of dinner in a restaurant next Wednesday? I would also write to Mme De Brimont if you knew that she would consent to do me the same pleasure that I hope from you,³⁵ and if you would choose the restaurant and the time.

With an excess of politeness more painful to bear than a lack of it would have been, he still insisted on escorting me to the rue des Vignes (I had left the 6th arrondissement for the 16th because of the diligence of Big Bertha),³⁶ and, neither of us running out of consideration for the other, I escorted him in my turn, then he re-escorted me. And, so as not to hurt his feelings, I had to yield to this excess of chivalry (that lacked horses and even a car), and once his back was turned, I followed his indecisive steps, more furtively than a midnight shadow, a lover, or a malefactor. I was ready to reveal myself only if his cane missed the curb or if one of the rare cars on the roads threatened him. Then, after seeing him pass through the iron gate of the hamlet of Boulainvilliers, no longer worried, I could leave him.³⁷

As M Berenson³⁸ had requested that I introduce him to Pierre Louÿs, we arranged a meeting with him in his little modern brick stronghold in the hamlet of Boulainvilliers, the same park where the "Old Mistress" of Barbey d'Aureville went horseback riding.³⁹

Pierre Louÿs got up later and later. We waited for him for a long time in his salon overrun with books, certain of which had, for the occasion, been evicted from two armchairs and from one of the sofas. Gas logs burned without ever being consumed.

"What a lack of taste!" the disappointed Berenson murmured to me.

Stung for my old friend Louÿs by my new friend Berenson, I replied: "It seems to me that for a blind man"

"But before going blind, how did he tolerate certain of these objects, and these paintings?"

A second time I tried to restrain myself: "Not everyone can be a connoisseur of paintings!"

A connoisseur of people, I, at that instant, judged my new friend as severely as he judged the objects around us.

And what would he have thought if I had directed him to the home of another literary neighbor whose wit he would certainly have relished, but where he would have seen the Venus de Milo presiding over the cloakroom above the umbrella stand, evidently out of place, but are objects in museums and in the United States any better placed?

I would have done better to explain to this person with his overdeveloped vision that men of letters, even those with normal eyesight, have a whole other understanding of what they have before their eyes than people with underdeveloped taste.

They proceed less by aesthetic evaluations than by symbols. Their relations with external objects become symbols, almost mystical ones. They no longer see things with the eye of an amateur, but with that interior vision whence they derive their inspiration. It is through this phenomenon that Keats wrote one of his most beautiful poems, "On a Grecian Urn," inspired by an urn of no great merit, to which he attached the creativity already within him. The object, when it exists, is, for the writer, only a point of departure, not of arrival.

Pierre Louÿs once told me: "A woman who is too beautiful is inexpressive." The less beautiful ones reveal themselves to each person in a unique way, which draws us to them.

I imagine that it is this aesthetic—so dissimilar from his books, all imbued with plastic beauty—which excused Berenson's contempt.

Louÿs retained all of this tactile delicacy for his books. He found the ones he wanted and handled them with an almost magnetic precision. This new blind man, this virtuoso of blind-

ness, unable to consult the table of contents, opened the books to the passage he was discussing with us, so that, to us who were only sighted, he seemed clairvoyant.

And Berenson was won over, in an imperceptible way, to the cause of interior vision, far from the slavery of objective appearances which often tease more than they satisfy, and which, like every unsatisfiable passion, is paid much more than it is worth, whereas Pierre Louÿs lived in a perfect state of love, of uncontradicted accord with his books, undergoing exchanges that continuously renewed him. With a hand rested on one of his favorite books, he would quote from memory as if he were reading through the covers with his fingers. He caressed the vellum like a living skin. And it must have torn him apart when he was obliged to part with all these favorites.⁴⁰

A friend or a timely lover understood this pain, and the entire collection was repurchased and returned to Pierre Louÿs.

By a natural selection, shouldn't things return to or remain with those who exercise such an attraction over them? Paul Valéry, anxious about having lent Pierre Louÿs the letters that he had formerly received from him, confided to me that even though he asked for them back, he could never succeed in getting them returned. Their author no doubt considered them a repayment from himself to himself. Friendship as much as love undergoes fluctuations, and the tokens of a sentiment are badly reduced to dust at others' homes. In the adventures of the mind there are complaints, sudden turns of such delicacy that no law could govern them. And isn't it by a supreme intuition that every creature returns home to die, and restores to the dovecote all these scattered flocks—our letters?

Smoke, connecting smoke, the only hyphen between men.

4. *Anatole France: Among the Amazons*¹

*To Yvonne Serruys-Mille, on the death of Anatole France*²

Not knowing to whom to address my condolences, I send them to you, you were closer than his near relations. Your kinship of mind with this writer—whom hoards of gnats seize, trying to rival corporeal decomposition (if France was not a hero to his valet, perhaps it is the valet's fault)—your opinion, your memories of him, are the only things that can still convey him intact to us; he hid himself with so much irony. Because of you I saw him well and knew him better. You seemed to put him in touch with himself; as soon as he saw you, he recovered his vivacity and spirit.

Traveling from Saint-Cloud to Paris, with him wedged between us, we gave him a warmth that seemed to rise to his brain.

Wiser than David, didn't he abandon concubines in time? He even gently reprimanded the dancer Armen Ohanian, adorer of old men, in the oriental fashion, who threw herself at his feet to show him a respect that was ready for all sacrifices.³

"My child," he said as he lifted her up, "do not display yourself so, you seek to captivate your spectators too quickly. It is not a question of pleasing an audience only once, as in the

theatre. Be sparing with your wiles, because in life, the public remains!"

Had we not been present, he might have responded differently to the overly seductive Armen, who, understanding his sally, became quite intellectual, and asked him for a preface (a preface in the form of a letter, which was published in her *Danseuse de Shamahka* (Dancer of Shamahka).⁴

But that day, we were already in the seventh heaven of a building, Armen's roof-garden, overlooking Paris.⁵ In sight of a promised land for which he had done nothing and from which he would be excluded, France expressed a slight regret for not having known these athletic and cerebral women better, these modern androgynes, whom he had never touched, even in his works. In that instant, with his eyes fixed on the horizon, he conjured up future stadiums, the rebirth of the Olympic games, aerial tennis courts, sisterhoods that would replace the women he created, those women-utensils whose only exercise was bed.

I recall him often in this attitude, so that he might take his place among us again. If he absents himself, if he does not answer—he was indeed absent so often when he was invited—we can still continue to imagine that some other garden of Epicurus, where he lives again, detains him not far from us!

But would he like to return? Why? For whom? To rehire Brousson as his secretary? To remarry "Emma"? To be free for a Bourdelle? To sit again for Van Dongen? To hear once more the oily voice of Rappoport? To present himself to Paul Valéry and take back from him his neglected armchair? To see Mme de Caillavet die again? To write "Her death ended my life," then immediately begin being unfaithful to her again?⁶ He thought that he missed only one thing, a regret that, had he been a believer, he would have put into a prayer: "My God, give me back our morning breakfasts!"

I cannot believe that this was his most brilliant moment, so inclined did he remain to the other meals. During the war, we often had lunch or dinner with him at Saint-Cloud.

At Saint-Cloud, at Couchoud's, one thinks and thinks . . .⁷

And being a true philosopher, he didn't know very well what to think. He had beautiful gestures which did not carry. We wrote articles in the *Nations* which only we read.⁸

Then we tried to divert him from the journalists and politicians who pestered him to take sides where there was no longer a side to take.

To change France's ideas, I had him see Georges de Porto-Riche again, that old lover who was armor-plated against everything, except love's arrows.⁹ As I drove him to Saint-Cloud, he told me that he had just "broken off" . . .

"But doesn't *she* know anything about it?"

"I know it, and that is enough for me."

"Happy the man who asks for only one heart!"

"Blessed is he who does not ask for any."

Porto-Riche, with an aquiline profile that emotion made Jewish, having retained from love an overflowing meekness, asked me, on the way, if Gourmont had not yet received the cross that had allegedly been requested for him:¹⁰

"Where, on his rough homespun gown, would he have sported it, and for whom?"

Remy knew to expect nothing from anyone, to demand everything from himself. I, however, saw him blush when I told him about praises from Anatole France. At first, he was somewhat pleased, then his clearer eye, too clear, took control: "France does not mean everything he says when he praises."

For my part, I believe with deference in the sincerity of such a man, when he praises such a man.

And then, touched and blushing, France was very much in circulation, in possession of those skin-truths which he took, if not to heart, at least to skin, but which he no longer dared express publicly (the public having become an old maid, too tested and unfulfilled not to be ungraciously sensitive!).

I was present at and took part in France's inspiration, coming almost spontaneously as he spoke. He may not have expressed

“today’s ideas,” but they were at least his ideas of yesterday, which still invigorated him. And who is the man of tomorrow who will give us more thorough ones?

Gourmont enjoyed France’s mind. France savored Gourmont’s mind. They knew what men are too unaware of: that there is room for two, especially when one of them accepts none! But I also believe in M France’s magnanimity. Perhaps he submitted to contradictory honors out of an incorrigible, charming, and timid politeness that all of his vengeful irony came to relieve.

5. *Remy de Gourmont: The Amazon's Friend*¹

To those who are surprised that Remy de Gourmont does not play a larger role in these adventures of the mind, shall I reply as I did to several indiscreet journalists?

Not feeling up to the task, I was perhaps wrong to leave it to them. One of them did not hesitate to act in his usual perfectly childish fashion, uttering trenchant clichés about the memories that I had imprudently confided in him. Another acquitted himself with more imagination. Perhaps with too much imagination in comparing me to Horace Walpole and Gourmont to Mme du Deffand!²

Besides, Rouveyre had such a presentiment of what I would say that if I described this friend of the Amazon after he did, I would risk plagiarizing my own story.³

The Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre, in her “Tardif envoi de fleurs” (“Belated Gift of Flowers”),* has satisfied the fastidious readers who are entitled to such pages.⁴ For them, with the help of Jean de Gourmont, and M Gauthier of the “Sirène,” we exhibited, under glass, some tender and precious relics;⁵ and, in that *chapelle ardente*,⁶ the only one that would not have dis-

* *Mercure de France*. [NCB's note]

pleased Gourmont, friends—René Quinton among them⁷—of-
ficiated, bringing new proofs of the law of intellectual constancy.

I must also acknowledge Paul Escoube who, in *La Femme et le Sentiment de l'amour chez Remy de Gourmont* (Woman and the Feeling of Love in the Works of Remy de Gourmont),⁸ has grasped so well the evolution of this feeling, that I would gladly quote extracts from it rather than from something I wrote. However, by way of apology, I repeat:*

You ask me for some memories about Remy de Gourmont.

Shall I confess to you the wealth of my disorder?

I have no memories.

Of these memories, kinds of post-mortem images, which are still in
a fluid state within me.

I hesitate to stop this fusion by effigy!⁹

To tell the truth, the tangled life, uninterrupted, has no memories.

The time for relics, that time of absence, of love's dearth, has not yet
appeared to me.

This tidying, out of fear of mislaying, precedes the other confusion:
that of forgetting.

Shall I again confess to you: I do not experience death.

It does not make me give up as much as does the tiniest separation
born of misunderstanding between the living.

Death has not been put in its place.

To one who does not live on a being through the body, death is only
a bodily accident.

I shall continue to live Remy de Gourmont, not to relive him.

I do not reap in order to gather into barns.

The seasons have not ended.

And when I have told you this or that episode,

Handed over this or that letter,

Will you be any better off?

Instead, go find him again in that better part: his books.

"That which has existed just once has become eternal."¹⁰

Temporary vicissitudes are the illustrations of history, and are never
appropriate in their place.

* *La Réponse de l'amazone* (The Amazon's Reply), published in various news-
papers and reviews at the time of Remy de Gourmont's death [NCB's note]

In extracting them from their sequence I would give them a false emphasis.

This silent prayer is a piety that I leave to you, to you who have "lost" him.

Let the dead bury their dead.¹¹

I now leave the crumbs that have fallen from the table, to those who feast on them, underneath.

Seated at my host's right hand, I continue the feast with him.

This magic is performed all the better since I have not had to contrast it with the facts to which others limit themselves.

I did not see Remy when he was mortally ill, or dying, or on his death bed.

I did not attend his interment,¹² I hardly recognize his tomb.

Each has his pity, his way of living his dead, of continuing them in himself.

Ceaselessly to contemplate an end is to create it.

And if I received several letters of condolence, they were of a quality to maintain my illusion. I quote a part of Dr. Couchoud's letter:

. . . Who will exemplify that magnificent freedom of thought? What mind will ever have that accuracy, that daring, that grace? Who will have that vigor of intellect and that nobility of heart? Who will know how to contain within himself the intellectual universe and, at the same time, to love with that naïveté, that depth, that simplicity? You inspired his masterpiece.¹³ He owed you his highest joys. As for us, we are indebted to him for having expressed them. . . . We have come to know a new and noble specimen of humanity in him, a poet Spinoza, a mystic Voltaire, an ascetic satyr, the greatest voluptuary and the greatest saint of his day.¹⁴ . . . Today, permit me to express to you my sorrow which I join with all my heart to your own, as the leaf of a tree unites itself, in falling with those of the forest.

And these sentences from the widow of André Puget:¹⁵

I have had a very moving respect for him ever since you introduced me to him. And such pity for his poor body. It would be so wonderful to be able to believe that spirits remain. We cannot. However, if the soul of Remy de Gourmont is not annihilated, if it exists somewhere, that would not be more extraordinary than knowing that it was activated by his unfortunate body.

It is possible that this faun in monastic habit is no longer a hermit in his own home, six flights above the rue des Saints-Pères.¹⁶

I shall not go to the half-opened door to verify his absence. I shall not proceed through the antechamber and his rows of books to the largest room, where his table extends, at the right of a grated window. I shall not contemplate his rush pen, the ink dried up in its mirage well, the letter-size sheet awaiting the small handwriting, the well-spaced words, each making its silhouette stand out of the spaced lines, the burn mark from a cigarette spark, punctuation of attention broken by some elusive pursuit or simply by the rolling of a new pinch of tobacco that sticks out beyond the thin paper and flares up.

I shall not lean on the invisible shoulder, I shall not make his cane armchair creak, a garden chair from which he studied life and its contortions without going out any more.

Seated opposite him, I question his clear eyes that are of that youthful blue of a flower under glass. His glances, like two children living in a ruin, communicated a joyous audacity all around, then allowed an anguish to come across them. . . . His scarred face, his lips swollen and stammering. . . . On an impulse, my hand goes across the table to meet his hands, which are as dry as parchment and yet warm, a warmth that has always surprised me, as much as seeing his large full-blooded neck bent over some shelf of his library. Then seated near one another, we completed peaceful journeys in the old sailing book that he had just brought to light. Having persuaded him to venture as far as the Bois de Boulogne, I rowed for him on the artificial lake. He

got so used to going out that I managed to get him aboard my riverboat, and we went as far as Normandy, calling at Rouen.¹⁷ He pitched through the narrow streets with difficulty, then stumbled back up the gangplank. We sailed as far as Caudebec, where our machine drank salt water and had to halt and find its fresh-water course again. Descending to Saint-Wandrille, we visited Maeterlinck.¹⁸ Already greying, this great man always seemed about to run away, from a glance at the moving pupils sliding their two green grape seeds here and there. The Gothic walls of the abbey were less his than the two large modern leather armchairs in the chapter room.

Maeterlinck's good Belgian sense used the mystical art seasoned to contemporary taste. This broth that he sipped like a master chef haloed him with such steam that his true character was blurred. Maeterlinck talked to Gourmont about "mystical Latin,"¹⁹ then whispered to me: "This man is an ink bottle."

Maeterlinck, this mystic on a motorcycle,²⁰ in search of a life to regenerate, amused himself at home by aiming his gun over the edge of the balcony, from where, relaxed, he shot in a fan shape across his entire plain, with a young girl at his side to change his cartridges; is she the same girl whom he ended up marrying?²¹ This all-too-comfortable arrangement shocked my sporting sense. We left him thus.

Georgette Leblanc,²² having accompanied us to the boat, climbed to the bow, its liberty sails unfurled—but the breeze was too weak and the mast too short for the figurehead that she wanted to imitate.

Each morning, before rejoining me on my boat, Gourmont wrote his "ideas of the day" article for *la France*, and it is not surprising that many of these articles were rustic or fluvial in nature.²³ These real journeys gave a new zest to this recluse, whose horizon had been limited on the south by the secondhand booksellers on the quai Voltaire along the Seine and the photographs of the gare d'Orsay; on the east by his "Café Flore"; on the north by his mansard, at 71, rue des Saints-Pères; and on the west by my small temple to friendship.

For a long time, his work had drawn its material from books, and isn't it into books that he had put his past?

Too invalid of body to practice pleasure, too lucid to be ambitious, it was good for him to stand out to sea on the arm of an Amazon. Friendship is perhaps an imported sentiment for which most Frenchmen have little taste. Inclined to material or abstract pleasures, they have no room left for this extravagance. And perhaps even a Celt like Remy de Gourmont²⁴ would never have experienced the singularity of such a feeling if he had not discovered the use of his most secret yearnings. Devastated in his flesh, in revolt against God, having resisted all belief, he finally found in friendship—that worship of intimacy—a compromise between love and religion.

As for the letters born of this friendship with continual services: they were often the reply to some question raised in our talks and which he would go off and develop at leisure in his solitude. His head became overheated with ideas that he had been unable to express in person. No matter how accustomed he was to my presence, he went off to write them; and before forwarding them to the *Mercure*, I commented on them while reading them with him. I read, he watched me read, and this was the moment of intensity toward which his expectation converged: what I would say first of all, what I would not say, occupied him so keenly that I had this impression: on breathless lookout for my thought, he intercepted it, scarcely had it been formed, in order to possess it. Thus, he had the joy of seeing a privileged reader experiencing firsthand the impressions that he had just created . . . and that he had managed to communicate to all women readers through me.

After the publication of *Lettres à l'amazone* (Letters to the Amazon),²⁵ women wrote to Gourmont, excited by his understanding, to the point of appropriating it to themselves, and thus they shared his friendship through me. He wrote me about one of them: "This morning I received a great sentimental letter from an upset woman. From a woman who would like to be part

of my life! And that seems so odd to me! But in my life there is no room for a pin.”

Through his writings almost every writer arouses passionate confessions and becomes the driving power for feelings that are idle or unsatisfied elsewhere. These unknown women dedicate a cult to him, they address more and more urgent prayers to him. But the unanswered prayers punish not only those who pray but also the one who has the impudence to respond. And the spell cast in the interval too often is broken at the first meeting.

I suggest this formula for writers who are too often solicited: “Madame, forgive the vanity of my abstention and allow me to overcome the temptation of getting to know you by that of not disappointing you. . . .”

My meeting with M Gourmont, without retrospective correspondence, without the bond of obligations, left us free to see one another again or not to see one another again. And our letters were prompted by our first meeting and not ended by it.

One could read in the *Mercure* the 222 *Lettres intimes à l'amazone* (Intimate Letters to the Amazon), which detail the last five years of his life and the friendship that accompanied them. These letters serve as a preface to, as a commentary on, and as a conclusion to the *Lettres à l'amazone*.

Would Gourmont have opened his door so wide to any other unfamiliar woman?

Inside his entry door was nailed a tapestry representing a vociferous, viperine head which no doubt symbolized for him what comes to us from outside. As soon as he recognized my ring,²⁶ he would snatch me from the threshold as if he had rescued me from some peril. And when he had to show me out, he would remain suspended at my descent. On the fore-shortened banister that was polished from use, he saw only my hand or my smile rising toward him between the gas lamps of the spiral staircase that was as long as a tower's. The smooth walls slid between the floors, unmarked save for the vaccinations of the gas company. When I had reached the level of the court-

yard (where a peaceful rabbit nibbled around a solitary tree), I would glance a last time toward the top of the stair. He would be there.

Reassured by this discreet surveillance, I would go out. I never saw his door close.

6. *Marcel Proust*

“What has become of you, Miss Barney? I haven’t seen you in ages. Marcel Proust has spoken to me of you. He is very curious about you and would like to meet you. Something ought to be arranged, but he is so ill.”

Paul Morand, whose conversation seems to be made up of the platitudes he excludes or erases from his books, spoke thus to me about his friend Proust at the *Bal des Petits Lits blancs*.¹ As this beginning promised no particular attraction, I spoke to him about a common friend, a woman I had recognized in his *Tendres Stocks* (Green Shoots).²

“Judge me only by my poems,” he implored. Then, dancing off with Cécile Sorel,³ plumed like a bird of paradise, he made a mocking grimace about his partner over her blind shoulder, no doubt in an attempt to vindicate himself in my eyes. This gesture was curiously like a remark by Gide that had just been quoted to me: “Miss Barney is one of the few people one ought to see—if one had the time.”⁴

Following Morand’s advice, I looked for him in his poems and discovered his Proust.

*Ode to Marcel Proust*⁵

Shadow
born of the smoke of your fumigations,⁶

face and voice
 corroded
 by nightly wear,
 Céleste,⁷
 with her gentle rigor soaks me in the black juice of your room
 which smells of warm cork⁸ and dead hearth.

Behind the screen of notebooks,
 under the lamp, blond and sticky like jam,
 your face lies on a chalk-white bolster.

To me you extend hands gloved in floss silk;
 silently your beard grows again
 at the bottom of your cheeks

I say:

“You seem to be getting on very well.”

You reply:

“Dear friend, I have nearly died three times since
 morning.”

.....
 Proust, to what revels do you go at night that you return with
 eyes so tired and clear?⁹

What terrors to us forbidden have you known that you return so
 indulgent and so kind?
 and aware of the toil of souls
 and of what happens in the houses
 and that love hurts so?

.....
 The *Pensées d'une amazone* (Thoughts of an Amazon) went to
 him on his sickbed.¹⁰

LETTER I

Mademoiselle,

I have only your book, because I am recovering from an
 illness which greatly resembles death, no doubt prepares for it,
 and so preoccupies me that I hardly have time for anything else,
 today when I am a sort of convalescent corpse, a ghost that opens
 its eyes and gets up about three hours every two weeks, to write

and thank people. However, I wish to tell you the main part, postponing the detail to better days, that your book is delightful and profound* and puts all of mine to shame. Alas, nothing less than *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (Cities of the Plain), if I ever have the strength to correct the proofs, will be an antiphonal response to your sweet song. The divine peach of the *Eclogues*, of the *Symposium*, the freedom of Lucien, do not reign there,¹¹ but rather the dark despair of the two verses by Vigny which, five years ago now, I gave as an epigraph, and which you also quote.¹² How I would like to chat with you about all of this, also in better days. In the meantime, I read you and beg you to accept my respectful compliments.

Marcel Proust

LETTER II

Mademoiselle,

Your charming invitation both tempts and distresses me. I have a fever of 40° [104° F]. Shall I never get to know you? Or, rather, shall I not succeed, as I fully hope, in breaking these misfortunes that keep me away from everything, that have, to my great chagrin, kept me away from you. If I still do not send you *Le Côté de Guermantes* (The Guermantes Way), which is published today¹³ (if I can believe my publishers, although it is wise never to believe them), it is because I still hope to find you an “original edition,” a baneful invention that suppresses the first editions and reserves the third for the author. Now I do not flatter myself that a third edition, even with a dedication that is laudatory, that is to say, sincere, would be as valuable to you as an original edition. I have a nostalgic curiosity about the little Temple to Love,¹⁴ and beg you to accept my admiring respects.

Marcel Proust

*The word *profound* was added above the line: a very obvious *afterthought*.
[NCB's note]

Taste has become very severe. In publishing *Sodome et Gomorrhe* shortly, I cheerfully renounce all future honors.¹⁵ (Although, as I believe I have already written you, the character of my characters make my book somewhat less “objective” than I had wished.) I have just now finished rereading Baudelaire’s sublime *Épaves* (Wreckage), which in fact was part of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil).¹⁶ How much more daring it is than all the things that people find daring. Forgive the disorder of this letter. I am even amazed that, with so much fever, I was able to write it. It is the first one in a week.

LETTER III

Mademoiselle,

I shall write to you at length. I no longer have a fever and have returned to my usual illness. But I would not like to add to it a recurrence of the one I have just had. And I am afraid of the rather chilly Temple.

“When October, pruner of old trees, whistles
Its melancholy wind about their marbles.”¹⁷

If not, on the day I get up, would you like me to send you about 7 o’clock a request that I may come about 11:30? Infinite thanks for the cab. I have an old taxi to which I am too well accustomed, and which is so small that I can keep warm in it.¹⁸ There is no difficulty in that area. But understand that today I had absolutely promised to see my friends, having rested expressly for that purpose. And I have been quite unable to get out of bed. As all my desire is to see *you* and in a manner as little “society” and as much “anti-society” as possible, perhaps it would suit you if I came (when it would best suit me) when you return for the evening. Let’s say midnight. I imagine that I shall get up tomorrow, Thursday, or more probably Friday or Saturday. But don’t you think an unaesthetic spot which would be very hot would be better, reserving the Temple for the summer. Fancy that I suddenly imagine that I saw you once (but the

chronology seems to me to make that impossible). At a gala matinée at the Français, I went into a stage box to say hello to Mme Adolphe de Rothschild, who had with her Lady de Grey,¹⁹ some Manchester woman, and a girl whose marvelous fair skin intimidated me so much that I immediately returned to my seat in the orchestra. Alas, it seems to me impossible that this was you because of the dates.

Yours very respectfully,

Marcel Proust

We set the time and place for the meeting. But those who want to meet do not always do so.

LETTER IV

Mademoiselle,

I have again caught a cold. So I no longer know what, at least precisely, immediately, to tell you. Regarding the theatre box, I must have omitted some words and thus was unintelligible. Because that incident dates from an era when you must have been twelve years old (if you had even been born). Something comic or touching, as you like—I rediscovered one of my books from this period, in which there are some verses about a little temple to Friendship. These verses are very bad, but I like to see in them the sign of a predestination. Your saying—"First of all for the last time"—is very lovely. I am like you, I do not follow the advice of Vigny: "Love what will never be seen twice."²⁰ I love only what I can always see again. But each day I believe that I am living for the last time. I would very much like to meet you before I die.

Your respectful,

Marcel Proust

LETTER V

Mademoiselle,

As I never think about myself, I am not concerned about being seen, but about seeing. Therefore I have a great desire to

pmeet you, even if you should find me disagreeable, so certain am I that I shall find you charming. I term “anti-society” any meeting where we would be alone together, and in any case, with no one from the social set. Afterwards, when we know each other better, we will decide between ourselves whom we judge worthy of our company. This is a bit late because I poisoned myself (not out of a desire for death, loving so much ghastly life, to which I cling by no more than a thread, but out of anger at not being able to sleep any more, which caused me to take an entire box of Veronal capsules at one time, along with some dial, and some opium); instead of sleeping, I suffered horribly.²¹ And I have before me some baneful promises to people who have been very generous to me. Afterwards I shall come to your home (if you will have me), I do not know exactly when. Here it is impossible. The Ritz is boiling, which I adore. It is the ugliest house in existence (after my own apartment), but that is all the same to me. At the age of twenty I felt that residences, whether ugly or beautiful, looked the same to me—except for uninhabited architectural masterpieces, just as there is hardly any difference between fashionable people who are witty and fashionable people who are stupid; perhaps a slight superiority would be accorded to the second category, which is more restful than the one that thinks itself intellectual. The only thing that makes the Ritz—so healthy for me—atrocious are the gentlemen and ladies who dine there. The hideously comic rococo ceiling neither disturbs my daydreaming nor threatens my head (since the Berthas and Gothas stopped or were suspended),²² but this man or that . . .

The conclusion to this letter is missing. Because I try to save everything, I rarely save what is essential.

Taking advantage of this truce, the rendezvous was again set for my home on the rue Jacob, for around midnight.²³

My home, then heated by wood, had with difficulty reached the 22° [approximately 70° F] demanded by my visitor. This

temperature, which was customary for him, did not succeed in melting his mental habits nor I in breaking them. Settled everywhere in the prison of his partialities, he was no longer revivable. Indeed, he had reckoned that he had not more time for that.

In vain I tried to lead him onto a territory that we still had not explored²⁴—he preferred to take refuge near the “Belgian carillon of Mme de Guermantes’ laugh,” and other social pleasantries that he must have often told with success.²⁵

He was more concerned with entertaining me than with discovering me. For both our sakes I regretted this formality. As it got later, he ventured to try other remarks on me. And the night became the slate on which he traced the observations of his Society epic. It would have been easier to interrupt a lecture at the Sorbonne, everything had been set in advance, impossible to add anything to it. His familiar poisons sufficed to stimulate him.

Draped in an ermine chasuble which serves as my dressing gown (I had tried to sleep while waiting for him), I seemed to be presiding religiously at Rites of puerilities, attentive to his face which was fixed like a mask on the wall, denying mirrors its languid and worn appearance, and its eyes ringed by the vampires of solitude. The moustache of a romantic black. His voice . . . but his voice escapes me—that timbreless voice of dreams replaces it. However, his voice rather than what he said should have brought me this being, frozen in his surveillance. The starch of his shirt front, his attire, gave him the official attitude of a corpse laid out in its coffin. Without appearing to look at me, he observed me. Macabre and compendious, did he push everything down into his laboratory of decomposition? He did not operate in the public eye. I had the impression that no one had ever had with him a moment of genuine exchange created by the immediate transfusion of thought. I had indeed foreseen that our first meeting would be the end of our imaginary intimacy. We struggled weakly. I invited him with friends, realizing

how completely defenseless we were against each other. I tried to find other associations for him. But, hidden from men of letters from whom he concealed his aversion by seeing them as little as possible, he had this *pneumatique* written to me:²⁶

LETTER VI

Dear Mademoiselle Clifford,

Forgive me for not being in a state today to write you myself. Forgive me above all for not being able to accept the marvelous invitation. Your letter was almost entirely illegible. Was this your intention? and if so, to conceal roses, or thorns? The second hypothesis would be very cruel, because, for the past six months, there is no one toward whom I have made as many advances of kindness (kindness is a very weak word) as much as toward you. I believe I read the name of Lucie Delarue-Mardrus in your letter.²⁷ If she is present where you have invited me to come, my regrets will be even greater, because there is no great poet whom I admire more than she, the Muse of Brocéliande.²⁸ I do not have the impression when you write to me that you are aware that you are writing to a corpse. At any rate, the corpse is perhaps going to get up a bit, but he has not left his bed for a month.

Mademoiselle, please accept my respectful compliments.

Marcel Proust

LETTER VII

Mademoiselle,

I shall explain to you what happened; an outing the day before to say good-bye to my friend Reynaldo²⁹ and there at midnight I make up my mind to ring; I am handed various letters and the dear *pneumatique* that grieves me.

“The story of happinesses that I would not have had.”³⁰

I shall be very happy to see you with these two ladies and, meanwhile, if one night I am not too ill, would you like me to

resume the solitary, nocturnal visit? What a still-born "nativity" your *pneumatique* brings me.

Your respectful,

Marcel Proust

LETTER VIII

Dear Mademoiselle Clifford,

You have been too good to me at any rate. Alas, I cannot enjoy the flowers because I have an illness (besides the others) which has sundry names, but too few (!), so manifold are the causes that arouse it—hay fever, rose fever, etc. Alas, also, having hoped until the last minute that I would get up yesterday, I could not. So I did not see you (and so many charming people about whom you have told me) and was not able to see or hear Mme Delarue-Mardrus. I understand your admiration for Poe (which would have doubled my admiration for her);³¹ even his books of simple adventure like *Arthur Gordon Pym* remain, in the desolation of my life, one of the blessings of memory. You tell me quite rightly that you have been very good to me, and, believe me, I have all the gratitude that is appropriate. But so as not to belittle too much my kindness relative to yours, I shall tell you that the kindness of a young lady who entertains; who is surrounded, very comfortably, by the world; who writes without fatigue, is something else, compared with the kindness of someone who, once a year, replies to a friend whom he has not seen in twenty years; who pays for the fatigue of this letter with long hours of fever; who scarcely gets up once a month and at untimely hours; who no longer has eyes, hands, or brain. Only then, if you add to my poor kindness this coefficient of rarity and pain, will you discover that it is not unequal to yours.

Dear Mademoiselle Clifford, please accept my respectful and grateful compliments.

Marcel Proust

And there we remained. He, crystalized in his toil, I, conscious of his crystallization. He had his work to bring to a suc-

cessful conclusion. Nothing that had not been preconceived could interest him. With all his slips of paper to elucidate, he only had a little time to finish what he had undertaken.

And, in learning of his death, I understood perfectly the wise purpose of his limits.

I awaited some definitive words on his death. *La Nouvelle Revue française* prepared a memorial issue.³² The tributes to Marcel Proust teach that no one buries a person better than a colleague. A very poor impression of a friendship results from the several remembrances of friendship that I read there. I turned toward Morand who, with a vacant, roaming eye that took in everything and then looked elsewhere, could find only this phrase of lapidary insignificance to tell me: "He leaves a great void." This slight and highly formal dispersal of his ashes by those who knew him best emboldens me to speak out about him.

Knowing him less—without frequent contact, that halo of steam that blurs the features—I have kept too spontaneous a view of him to be misled. Certain people have said that Proust described "life in slow motion." His observations seem to me rather those of a near-sighted person who sees only the details clearly, but details seen by no one else before. As everyone knows, Walter Scott³³ and Balzac had a less complicated passion for detail, since they were in no way involved with what they described. A nervous reaction of the well-assimilated life, focused on self, had to follow them. It is therefore less an objective slow-down than a consuming of every instant. Thanks to this patient fever and to this near-sightedness transformed into a virtue, the innumerable has become countable. The pigment of Proust's brain colors everything according to its own color. As a crystal that has sunken underground takes on, in remembrance of the light it has left, a whole rainbow of colors to take its place, so Proust seems to draw from his brain and stain with himself everything that had entered it in the pure condition of a foreign body. Far from being expelled, each thing there undergoes a complete elaboration, being graduated according to the shades

of personal chemistry. With that disease of the avaricious, he cannot help adding to what he appropriates. For, everything he takes, he enriches with himself. And what he shows is not so much life as it is his sensitiveness singularly worked by circumstances that are only its various nutrients. But rather than nourish himself with this substance he impregnates it with his poisons. Such writing seems to me to be a form of sickness—and sickness has its personality as much as the person himself. Poisons being more clarifying than passions, according to his poisons in accord with ours, he communicates to us certain social intoxications that seemed to be exclusively ours. His clientele of readers loves to be confessed, not cured.

Our acts are often only the expression of our inner demons; far from wishing to drive them out, Proust identifies himself with them, encourages them, and takes care not to exorcise them. For it must be feared that one is distinctive only through them and the vices that emanate from them. The virtues so resemble one another that their number has easily been reduced to twelve [*sic*] negative commandments.

After the first volume of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* had been published, I expressed to him my apprehensions of Gomorrah. He told me that in fact his Sodomites were horrible, but that his Gomorrhans would all be charming. I find them above all unrealistic! Not everyone who wishes to can penetrate the Eleusinian mysteries.³⁴ Even comparing it to whatever he may know of “the love that dare not speak its name,”³⁵ Proust could not have any contact with these mysteries. It is risky to substitute the one for the other: *The woman will have Gomorrah and the man will have Sodom.*

7. *Rainer Maria Rilke: Belated Appreciation*¹

Through his tribute to the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke,* Jaloux suggested to me an understanding for which I should have taken the initiative.² He garnered the friendship that I did not seize. No doubt my mind was elsewhere. Our adventure did not take place.

Isn't one of the traits of laziness—which so greatly delights me—that someone else undertakes the task of writing, of living, or of loving in my stead?

Kundry's laugh, awakened from its depths, pierces me to the soul.³

To my shame I will admit that I understood nothing of Rilke, that I did not think of him until he came to me in the form of his *Notebooks*.†⁴

I rarely read, in my time, not in theirs, the books that are presented to my pitiless mercy.

No incident in my tangled relations with the author of the *Notebooks* obliged me to pursue them. Even his dedications remained unanswered.

* *Rainer Maria Rilke*, by Edmond Jaloux, Émile-Paul. [NCB's note]

† *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, Émile-Paul. [NCB's note]

To Natalie Clifford-Barney

O the dilapidated or unfinished temple! . . . How should we adore a God who delights so much in ruins!

The offerings consume the altar and the salt of our sea tears corrodes the flagstones. And as for the columns: it takes two people to hold them up; it is their beautiful shaft which separates lovers. . . . So they bring it down with them in the slow fall of their infrequent embraces.

(End of June)
Muzot⁵

To Natalie Clifford-Barney

This book by which I should have wished
to be preceded into her presence,
in order to have to tell her only . . .
the rest.

And even his distant death struck no responsive chord in me.

Haven't I already stated that death, for those who live through the mind, is only a physical accident?⁶ I still did not know that on this point, as on many others, I agreed with the poet Rilke.

And I certainly feel myself close to this vision:

The passage of time played no role for him, death is a small accident of which he was completely ignorant, the people he had once welcomed in his memory continued to exist there, and their death changed nothing in this regard.⁷

The visible is perhaps an illusion . . . and how often presence robs us of beings whom absence gives back in their proper dimension!

His stay in Paris failed to bring us together:

Hôtel Foyot, 33, rue de Tournon, Wednesday.

As I was passing your door, yesterday morning, audacity prompted me to see if the God of this small unknown temple would allow me to exchange the hundred denials of a bad winter day for the undated grace of a consenting moment. It was for nought, the God had his face turned elsewhere.

And as for Friday: I have had to forego the distribution of the

small invitations written in my behalf.⁸ A previous engagement (which perhaps will earn me a talk with you about it one day) denies me the pleasure of joining you and of meeting your friends, who continue to interest me. I will miss still more the brief moment I would have spent seated near you; insignificant for you and steeped in change, its secret power reveals itself to me, as if (how inexactly, alas!) I outwardly represented one of the constellations ordained and prefigured in the mind.

Thursday

Heartbroken last night over this missed "rendezvous"! . . . Against whom should I bear a grudge? Against that luck that has made no effort on my behalf? . . . Against my drowsy instinct, bad watchman, that did not advise me of your friendly and so generous arrival? But perhaps it spoke to me. Only, finding myself at Versailles beneath the fullness of those skies, I did not hear it at all; spending several hours with no private life, in the manner of those laws that receive from without the awareness of their successive souls . . .

(Hence: almost *A Night in the Luxembourg* . . .)⁹

The analogies to which I had the temerity to pretend are found scattered a bit everywhere in my poems and in the rare lines of my prose; once the latter are translated, it will be easier to show them, that is, to offer them to your indulgence.¹⁰ Besides, you ought to know that where the greed of art (like that of love) disappears, there remains only a single voice that infinitely varies sounds and silences.

Weak and tired last night, I don't know if I had been strong enough to endure the test of those different minds and the winds of their atmospheres. With your short note before me, I stayed busy establishing, according to Valéry's method, the divine equation of presences and absences,¹¹ and I seemed to myself rich by dint of not choosing among all the smiles.

P.S.—The uneasiness persists: nevertheless, tomorrow I hope to be able to mingle with the friendly "fortunes" of your Fridays.

This letter, like the previous one, complicated beyond its subject, had not seduced me. And I decided to make no more overtures, even vague ones, toward this out-of-step being, when this simpler note made me reconsider my decision, by showing me what was being hidden by his humility.

Wednesday

Dear Mademoiselle,

I returned saddened from yesterday's soirée, not so much because of it, but out of fear that it would become the symbol of my Parisian stay, in the sense that the vague and inadequate crowd might prevent me from developing and cultivating the several rare possibilities of a true admiring contact. It is under this threat that I admit to you my very intimate desire to see renewed, perhaps within the next week, the incomparable fortune of my early days, that of spending a quiet, thoughtful evening beside you, in a very select party.

I realize the immodesty of my confession; however, what is the value of modesty when facing the object of one's devotion?

The *Pensées d'une amazone* (Thoughts of an Amazon) has become my bedside book over the last few weeks. If you were familiar with a book I lately wrote in Paris, you would find in it certain passages that are strangely fraternal with your *Pensées*.¹² From this discovery I have drawn a pride and an assurance that, since then, have greatly contributed to perfect the admiration I have for you, to make it, so to speak, more central and infinitely mine.

I arranged the soirée he had requested; he missed it. In turn, I missed those arranged for Rilke. Flight through mirrors, hands that reach out in vain to meet hands.

I bore him a grudge for being unseasonably sick. Not to control one's body has always seemed to me almost an impropriety.

Then, when disappointments multiply, aren't there deeper reasons of which they are only the sign?

An incompatibility of temperament no doubt existed between myself and German writers, even the most refined ones.

That dates back to the impressions of my seventeenth year when, sent to Iena, in the forest of Turingen, at Weimar, that heart of old Germany, then to Dresden, to learn German, I brought to it such a force of inertia that I returned having assimilated only the accent (which my violinist's ear could not resist).¹³ I reproduced the sounds of that language like a song without words!

And it was only in 1927, in reading Rilke's *Notebooks* and rediscovering the last passage from his last letter, that I was struck by the obsession of one who resembled me like a brother, a brother certified as such by no document during his lifetime, and who revealed himself a close relation through this strongly shared heritage, but which seems bequeathed to me alone.

I believe that there is no final achievement, but there are long-term resolutions, which last all one's life, so that one could not even expect their final achievement.¹⁴

Like all dilettantes, we are corrupted by superficial delights, and we are supposed to possess mastery over them.¹⁵

. . . No, no, there is nothing in the world, not the least thing, that can be imagined. Everything is composed of so much and so many unique details, that nothing can be foreseen. In imagining, we pass over them, and because we imagine so rapidly, we no longer notice that they are missing. But realities are slow and indescribably detailed.¹⁶

. . . For this strange Bettina has, throughout all her letters, created space, and a kind of world of enlarged dimensions. Since the beginning she has spread out into everything, as though she had already transcended her death.¹⁷

. . . For I was to create him as one creates a dead man, whose existence no longer can be proven, whose remains no longer can be found; a dead man who must be constructed completely within oneself.¹⁸

. . . Being fair meant deciding in favor of all . . .¹⁹

They all canceled each other out, and nothing was done.²⁰

And if the time then comes for livelier friendships, let it be your secret to call one another: Dika, Anactoria, Gyrinno, and Atthis.²¹

. . . Louise Labbé was not afraid of frightening this child with the long sufferings of love. She showed her the nocturnal surge of desire and promised her pain like an enlarged universe; and she suspected that with her fully experienced grief, she was far from attaining that obscure expectation which made that adolescent girl beautiful.²²

When she knew that the union of two beings only increased the solitude; when she surpassed the earthly end of her sex by her infinite purpose; when, in the darkness of embraces, she did not seek satisfaction but desire; when she scorned the notion that of two beings, one should be the beloved, the other the lover; and when weak beloved girls whom she led to her bed left it, fortified with love and ready to leave her.²³

Didn't she know that God was only a direction given to love?²⁴

You alone, you are a part of my pure solitude.²⁵

He will recall with what firmness he had then decided never to love, so as not to put anyone in that dreadful position of being loved. Years later he remembers and, like other projects, this one too has been unachievable. For he loved and loved again in his solitude; each time squandering his whole nature, and with a terrible fear for the liberty of the other. Slowly he learned to make the rays of our feeling pass through the beloved object, instead of consuming it in her. And he was spoiled by the enchantment of recognizing through the increasingly transparent form of the beloved the depths that opened before his desires for endless possession.²⁶

Every shared feeling is in fact a kind of aggression.

But fear, the fear of being loved, must not have caused his flight: we were a thousand miles from that point.

Only Swedenborg, who is sadly unknown, and Goethe, thinking about elective affinities,²⁷ blended with love this return to mysticism, a return very different from that of chivalry, elevating the woman so high that one could no longer touch her, that one "feared nothing more than having one's prayer answered."²⁸ From women's crystallization into madonnas, whom they succeeded, Goethe, the alchemist, decomposes them and recom-

poses them according to the laws that escape from life, in order to abstract himself, and to perfect himself through the more than sensual evolution of his affinities.

Why had we been, Rilke and I, either too discreet, too absent, or too clumsy? Didn't I bear him a slight grudge for his lack of harmony in events, didn't I consciously let him fall into the net of oblivion, whence, thanks to his book, I now fish him up? Departures and returns and new departures are something like a trapeze in movement. Hands release hands, the body unbends, soars, pivots, bends, and catches hold of the precisely extended hands. Success of the rendezvous through space, arabesques of danger, trajectory closed by the security of a death that puts an end to our miscalculated movements.

Death, what a beautiful field of fall. To get enough recoil in it to lose oneself—or to rediscover oneself.

Shadows are the guests of my solitude.

. . . And now if he appears as a ghost?

8. *Fleg, Then Zangwill, Then Fleg*

There is nothing like a small cream cheese. A quarter-century ago, Fleg looked like one—all tidy, plump, and blonde.¹

It was surprising not to see a luge cord in the mitten of this good little boy. His scarf thrown back, we set out on the short wintery stroll from Neuilly-Saint-James to Paris. The icy air quickened our minds. Then *Julius Caesar*, heard from the back of a lower box at the Odéon, excited him. From his shadowy corner Fleg whispered: “How beautiful it is! How beautiful it is!” The strength of his excitement prompted me to ask him why he did not write plays.

“One is being performed right now: *La Bête* (The Beast). Would you like to see it?”²

There was something harsh in this play which surprised me: “And this too is pleasure,” admitted his hero in the paroxysm of torture. *Le Démon* (The Demon), that simple scene, so beautifully ugly, between two weary lovers,³ made me think Fleg very precocious, for I was unaware that he was Jewish. (The sculptor of revelations, Chana Orloff, alone had grasped this triple visage.)⁴ I rarely go to the theatre, but I always go to his plays. Since the war, he has perhaps done more to reconcile the antagonists than any tedious propaganda. He has simplified his mind to the point of seeing God, and he no longer leaves Him. Witness his *L’Enfant prophète* (The Child Prophet).⁵

He invited me, he and Mme Fleg, who very quietly entered our intimacy (to be three, yes, when no one is the third), to meet Israel Zangwill.⁶

This man, great in more ways than one, so lacked any practical sense that I spontaneously had to add mine to his. I promised that each time he returned to Paris I would meet him at the station, him and his suitcases, and take care of them, like Martha—which, when one is more like a Mary, is not without merit.⁷ On one of these crossings, I found him with a wife and two children who no more resembled him than the rest of the events to which he exposed himself. Another time, having to escort him from the Gard du Nord to the P.-L.-M.,⁸ I took him in the interval to my house to have some tea and to rest. I had already proven myself time and again. He therefore surrendered himself to my arrangements. (These plans which fascinate me so strongly are a sort of mathematical science that I apply to life.) On the way he showed me a telegram that he had just received from Mexico, offering him a considerable portion of that country for his Zion; he was going to enthuse that he had been offered this for nothing: "Out of sympathy for this great movement,"⁹ when I remarked to him that Mexicans, no longer able to sell their alcoholic products openly to the Americans, found this offer to their advantage. He had to yield to the evidence, and he seemed depressed. Each time that he completely relaxed, something forced him to coil back up. Despite his tea, he became preoccupied, nervous. One of my friends, Vincent O'Sullivan, paid me a visit.¹⁰ As they knew each other only by name, I had to introduce them to each other, then Zangwill jumped up: "My train! Change for the porters! I don't have any change!" Pitifully, he held out a twenty-franc bill that Vincent O'Sullivan offered to change into small coins. He took them in the hollow of his palm, which was more worn than the furrows on his brow, and, prompted by a hereditary absent-mindedness, he went over to the window-recess to recount the lot. Vincent O'Sullivan's scornful silence weighing on this unconscious action, I came to Zangwill's aid—

“Isn’t it likely that the saying ‘Good accounts make good friends,’ originated with us?”

“What do you mean *us*?” Zangwill asked, moved.

“Then you don’t know that my grandmother married a Jew? I have a fourth of your blood in my veins, and, off and on, it even shows itself strongest of all.”¹¹

Zangwill asked me for details. I was more specific:

“As Fleg well knows, I would have liked to appear in his *Jewish Anthology* (Anthologie juive) with the first sonnet that I wrote as a child: ‘To the Mothers of Future Christs.’”¹²

“Can you recite it for me?”

I recalled the first quatrain and the first tercet:

Dethroned are your Kings. Wandering, your people endure
The shame of carrying royal blood,
But no one will forget that from your chaste side
Blossomed the ideal of the purest soul

The whiteness of my creed has sprung from your breast,
And, if the ungrateful world wounds you with scorn,
It is your son it puts back on a Christian cross.

Zangwill, erect, studied me:

“What! You acknowledge even a little of this blood, when so many of our people hide all of it?”

.

A short time later, I learned of his death. This artist and this patriot of humanity had waged the good fight for his people and in spite of them. By way of condolence and consolation I wrote: “I am happy to know that he is indeed dead. He had so much need of rest.”

I can only picture Zangwill as old, tremendously old, patriarchally old.

Fleg I see only as young, increasingly young (where will that end?). Even at that ordeal “The Surprise Banquet” organized by Doctor Levenson, Chéreau, Bernheim, etc.,¹³ at which a Magus

from each field of endeavor came to hail this honest writer, who was of so high a moral excellence that they were all upset, he was as unpretentious beneath their praises, as much a good little boy in the heart of Paris as you would find in a “village run” in our countryside.

9. *Gabriele D'Annunzio: At Home*¹

Beautiful but hardly democratic manners seem definitely to have passed from France to Italy where, finding a setting adequate to their development, they have remained. How sad that *esprit*, that other endowment of Latin civilization, has not followed them! France and Italy, each deprived of an essential characteristic, share with each other the hesitation of foreigners, who, preferring, as I do, conversation to climate, and wit to a cordial welcome, nevertheless miss that courtesy which, despite what I had been led to fear, I found perfect beyond the Alps. A clean, respectable, orderly country, with electric trains, and garden chairs in the stations which make each trip seem like a stroll. And despite the overpopulation (which must be deplored), an unhurried pleasantness and an unanswerable good humor. And that satisfaction of being well managed which shows itself in the smallest recesses. Not everyone can be well tyrannized! Besides, tyrants are such a part of Italian traditions that they seem to usher in a second Renaissance. Don't Italy and the Italians always live a bit in a medieval age which suits them and which remains their best period?—And what have we, piteous civilized people, added of value?

A perfecting of machines—yes, to shift into reverse.

I see a worker drink ecstatically right from the bottle, after his lunch under the olive trees. It doesn't occur to him, as it

would elsewhere, to envy me the house from which I watch him. It is for me to envy him his thirst!

As much as certain earlier writers were repressed, so much Gabriele d'Annunzio is the man of our day who has most diversely fulfilled himself.

Unlike Barrès, who found a way by running counter to himself,² d'Annunzio has lived according to his impulses so generously that one does not know under what guise to prefer him.

An active prophet from the start, he promised, then forced Italy's stand to keep Dalmatia. (I was dining at the Berthelots's home where this covenant was made³ and, a short time later, kept in Rome by that speech at the Capitol which showed d'Annunzio to be the only orator-patriot of the war,⁴ having paid not only in words but also in person.) Because, imitating for real the card player who puts his glass eye on the table as a good-luck charm, didn't he sacrifice a real eye to the luck of the game?⁵ Solitary airman flying over the enemy that brought him down, or fighting alongside his men with as much endurance as any of them, or managing his Dalmatian conquest with the firmness, the imagination that made him the commander worshipped by his Arditi,⁶ standing firm and dictating his terms, victorious in the face of other powers, this poet of a collective action who withdrew, his task accomplished, in order to continue his career as a writer—and his adventures as a lover—is an example without equal.

His increased postwar isolation and contempt have given his successes that bitter aftertaste which continues to enhance him. And isn't it thus that Romaine Brooks painted him, in that prophetic portrait in the Musée du Luxembourg?⁷

In this exile from the grandeur that has survived and exceeded its zenith—and I lay down my arrows for a moment in order to disown my previous sightings, because when d'Annunzio settled in Paris we found him too pompous, too unassimilable⁸—despite the poetic gifts he displayed, he absorbed no atmosphere. In my garden one evening, while listening to the chimes of midnight falling from St. Germain des Prés, he evoked those

other bells back home to which he owed so much.⁹ His apartment in the rue Geoffroy-l'Asnier and even his villa at Moulleau* seemed unable to hold down this man of the Abruzzi,¹⁰ who was too saturated with his soil and his beliefs to adapt himself to this Paris of weak aestheticism, which was already preparing its best energies to defend itself. In surpassing the panache he seemed to flaunt, Gabriele d'Annunzio cured me of that prewar tic—derisive laughter, which restricts and, above all, makes ridiculous those who ridicule—to win me over to a more just and also more amusing admiration. I confess myself captivated by his movie-star handsomeness, by his diverse and grandiose posturing rather than by the man himself who, despite our attempts at understanding, remains for me a magnificent stranger—a stranger whom one visits, whose differences one criticizes and praises, but to whom one will never be close.

I was nevertheless delighted by a flattering letter from him. Isn't a letter of understanding more than a letter of love? The people whom one loves are innumerable (one loves with love those whom one cannot otherwise love), but those whom one admires? . . .

Friend,

Your thoughtful presence has been continual, in these days, in these bright hours of friendship and insight.

I showed Romaine the Amazon's book,¹¹ which is so full of aromatic bitterness and fragments of I-don't-know-what magic mirror and of arrows that seem to reopen wounds with the wind from their feathers. She noticed the numerous turned-down pages, and the marginal notes, and the blue marks of admiration.

It is my *will* (the "Comandante" commands) that you come to

* He had hoped that this house between heath and shore would be preserved for him but, for want of that noble gesture the French government owed him, this residence was bought by a bourgeois from Bordeaux who threw out his books and other relics in order to install himself and his family there. [NCB's note]

Le Victorial in September.¹² In my garden I shall have some roses similar to some of your cadences. Ave.

Gabriele d'Annunzio.

Le Victorial, 12 August 1925

I saw him again, scarcely aged, more ironic, more astute, and more distrustful under his triple glory, also more moved by a word, by a gesture of sympathy that was almost imperceptible, but which this heroic one-eyed man did not miss. At a luncheon amid a décor that resembled the banquet scene in *Saint Sébastien* reduced to the proportions of three guests (Romaine Brooks, himself, and me),¹³ he talked to us about the visit Paul Valéry paid him,¹⁴ about the tear in his eye, no doubt because of their Latin kinship! He recounted the trick he had played on an American in telling him that he had invented a way to print the *Georgics* and other classics on sheets of rubber so that they would float in the bath. The American asked him for the patent to this invention, made to order for that race, which is semi-aquatic, but not thereby cleaner than any other. Then he admitted to us that he had gone, with his compatriots, from a state of flirtation to a state of siege, and explained to us his grievances against St. Francis, a character of topical interest, whose head he had deposited in disfavor in a basket of pears at the entrance to his house.¹⁵

Oh! his house, what an assemblage!¹⁶ Several of the masterpieces found there are buried under rags and damask. — Mightn't d'Annunzio have Jewish origins? — Michelangelo's *Slave* wears a tunic of gold and black cloth "to conceal the error in proportion to his legs."¹⁷ An ancient Egyptian statue has an adhesive charm hanging from its mutilated penis. Another statue, dressed and headless, is stretched out on the divan, the only comfortable seat in the room. All those museum personages look as if they had agreed to meet in a house of ill repute.

But even there, the vision of the literary man is not responsible for what the artist sees with a naked eye.

This is an orgy that despises limits, breaks the laws of taste,

and stops, more than inspires, new intoxications. "It's an orgy of tangible ideas," our friend Romaine Brooks concludes. An orgy of tangible ideas, indeed, that manifests itself in this sort of apotheosis of audacity: the boat that he captured and put at the top of his hill at Gardone with its prow, its masts, its cannons, its flags, and its sailors, everything encrusted in a sea of reinforced cement.¹⁸

And this wholly symbolic poet perhaps believes that he has managed all of this according to pure beauty!

To rest from this fantasy that has been poorly conveyed by the vulgar jumble of odd objects, which a resident lady musician often cleans with the wave of her arm,¹⁹ one climbs toward the study of this wordsmith, who serves his art with a vocabulary that is four thousand words richer than that of Anatole France. (I have this information by word of mouth and am perhaps off by one zero!) In this room with its workshop windows, the air and the light at last enter free of rancid perfumes and cloistered colors.²⁰

A few plaster casts have made their way up here: has then a special selectivity been exercised amid all the profusion? In front of the writing desk stands a nude, draped, so pure that no inspiration will disturb those who look at it; and in a corner didn't I see a crystal cross?

A single photograph breaks the wall near the door which is halfway open to life. It represents Eleanora Duse, "that noble creature chosen by me and ruined for me."²¹

It is here, while fasting, that this poet, whose writing is so wide ranging, falls to his task.

His workmanship has such breadth that it has even convinced an illiterate from the Abruzzi, who understood his power while watching him write thus, subduing the paper with his pen. Large pages of handmade white paper on which a hand that tamed horses, greyhounds, women, airplanes, rudders and rulers, swords and firearms, imposes its mastery!

D'Annunzio, a precious little object of old ivory, works with the persistence of a monk who keeps vigil for his God. With an

inexhaustible brain and a scholar's skull that nothing truly stops, but which, like St. Anthony, lets itself be tempted by the world of images,²² he succumbs without remorse, and at times his art even abandons him there. And one feels that he himself is tired, that he can no longer bear that d'Annunzio person. But it is difficult to leave this world. And it is important that the exaggerated persona he has made of himself have a royal exit. All those who devote themselves to the theatre know how difficult it is to make the third act end well.

I know only one of his books that uses the image or excludes it in favor of the essential: it is his important *Contemplation of Death* (*La Contemplazione della Morte*).²³

He handed me this book on my last visit to his home, that autumn. At the same time he gave me a box that had been simply engraved by some goldsmith lodged under his roof. In offering it to me with a serious pomposity, he explained:

"I am giving you a talisman. Whenever you are aroused, touch it, and it will help you."

"And if I am not aroused, will it help me to be so?"²⁴

This sixty-five-year-old lover had not yet foreseen this deficiency.

But women, who make such a fuss about him because he is one of the few people who has perfected the art of seduction (calling them "Queen of Sheba" or fashioning still more flattering names for them), are reduced to being loved only from the waist down!

As for me, who has no liking for man except from ear to forehead, there remains an entire unexplored land which, it seems, contains the resources of the heart. D'Annunzio at least has its gestures, its noble gestures.

He once told me: "Image is the emotion of style." And sure enough, one almost blushes unwittingly in seeing a happy image appear on the paper. D'Annunzio acts the same way: on the tense, uplifted, faded face of a crowd, he imposes the image.

His force, his spontaneity, his naturalness make him the master of all situations. Feeling the need of a master, the collective

female soaks him up. He was obeyed because, first of all, he knew how to impose this voluptuousness on himself.

And could I not have expressed my impression simply with this assertive exclamation: "Yes, but so what?" or with that apologia for action contained in his motto: "In order not to sleep."²⁵

10. *Max Jacob*¹

Must one regret being less naïve than that old compatriot who received this declaration from Marcel Proust and accepted it without suspicion or humility and replied in kind: “With what profound emotion I reread this sentence from his last letter, written the day after my last evening with him and by which he sent me his last remembrance: ‘And you are the image to which I always return, you who are probably the being I love most in the world’; because he knew that he was dying, he knew that these words, the last dispatch of a deep friendship, would remain unforgettably, like a haunting perfume, in the memory of the heart.”

I read with a pleasure that was more literary than personal the praises that Max Jacob addressed to me. More revealing perhaps about himself than about me, I quote them so that the reader can relish there a pleasure similar to my own, for doesn't the phrase “my ideal” apply as much to himself as to me? Isn't the gift of almost all sentiment a richness that someone lends us? We offer to the unknown everything that the known has not been able to satisfy. (In rereading this letter I find the prohibition that Max Jacob wrote there as an epigraph): “I write to you only on the condition that I not be published at the end of the poems. I implore you! I implore you to spare me.” But amazons

are not averse to betrayal, and my abstention would deprive us, you and me, of relishing together so pure a page from the impure Max Jacob:

My dear ideal,

I shall explain myself: I have always dreamed of a poet who would result from a clash between mind and mind, between the reality of manners and the mind; who would have genuine roots in the hearts of others, in his own: the poet clashes, and forthrightly and without downstrokes; a poet who would sing without singing; who would describe without describing. And now I meet this poet whom I have not known how to be (I mean it! not at all!) It is you. I therefore write to myself, because it is to oneself that one always writes when one writes (really writes, don't you agree?); therefore, I say, to myself I write "My dear ideal." I could have written "My dear poet," but I was afraid that you would take me for that which I am not. Your book is as much my friend as a magic mirror which would be the image of what one would have wished to be. There is a confidence: poets are confessors; in poets' books one loves only what they confess to us, life being, alas, a continual sin.

My letter is finished. What more could I say. Your beauties are too innumerable for me to count; besides, I would not know how. Your faults? You know them and if you do not know them, someone has undertaken to enlighten you, your best friends, I think! Your friends have been very frank. Frankness is the virtue of . . . , etc.² I shall not speak ill of anyone because it is morning, and I emerge from a bath of prayers. And then also because age has made me prudent. Actually, your critics have not succeeded in enlightening me on the faults in a book that I love and which loves me.³

1st, "Which I love," because I love only those books which sum up an entire life (life being finished at the age of twelve); I have a horror of anecdotes, even if signed by Balzac. "Which I love," because I love the arrow that pierces a man to the depth

of his depth without reticence or hesitation, justice, accuracy and the horror of prejudice, which is the basis of the beautiful folly and also the statue of itself.

2nd, "Which loves me" because it seems to me to have been written for me, for me alone.

On the whole, I am hardly a critic of the arts. If I write to you, it is because your book is much better than "the fine arts"; it is an enlargement of someone unique (unique, alas! but not! thank God, unique like a blue diamond). Finally! I write to you because I was flattered to receive your book as if I were the admirable Mardrus,⁴ flattered still much more when I had finished rereading it.

I place at your feet the earthworm that I am. (Actually, stars do not have feet . . . who knows? . . . it would seem that the universe has the form of the human body.)

I am your grateful and respectful admirer, bound to you by this friend of a book and by unforgettable memories of precious meetings.

Max Jacob

My respectful regards to your beautiful and dear princess, please.⁵

Have I truly met this man with his glances in flight, a trout in shallow water, then an eagle staring into the sun, in a face of a converted legionnaire?

Max Jacob, so fluctuating, I am assured, in his relations, seems that he ought to keep his illusions intact in order to offer them only to God, whose supreme merit is to have known how to keep his distance.

My dear colleague,

The Ghika are the heroes of a complicated psychological novel: I would prefer that they might simply be its authors.⁶ For my peace and theirs. By months of penance I have duly earned the joy of seeing you and listening to you. It is the privilege of monks to have no mediocre joys. I shall not leave without having

received you here. Tell me how long I should wait for you. Do not believe that I have gone to visit that courageous Aurel this time;⁷ I sent there three pages that a pageboy has read. Out of a morbid fear of dying without confession, I cannot go to Paris even to catch myself in the act at my exposition (modernist style).⁸ What encouragement to know now that one can have a goal that is not fanciful: that of not displeasing you in one's works, the goal of my future. I am no longer surprised that your friends have genius, guardian angel. Your finest quality, for an author, is a line, a superior rhetoric. Jean Paulhan praised the "Colloques" (Conversations).⁹ To his taste, which is masculine, the thread to cut, the good (or what he calls such) was lacking; this thread is in your works. What improbable expiations, what unknown expiations! and what merits in the eyes of God! If I saw you occasionally I would write everything like this *Conversation I*, which is my spotless reflection, while the others are only the imitation. You have felt that. Bravo.

I am at your feet with very humble thanks. With others less humble and ultimately with much admiration.

Your friend.

Max Jacob

I once crossed Tuscany at golden twilight, something like paradise but much better. The ears of God must have burned to be spoken of again, finally, with this simplicity:¹⁰

"You do not often tell me that you love me."

"Lord, You speak harshly to me."

"That is because I am jealous. Give me your penholder and leave your writings."

"We are alone together. There is no one on earth except You and me."

"You have awaited me for a long time!"

"You were behind the curtain; I knew it, Lord."

"It is so natural for you to believe in me that you forget to love me. Do not be a dupe. Meditate on my attributes. Let this be your only goal."

“Lord, I am drunk with You and with my youth.”

“I hear you dying of love at my side.”

“Lord, you are a blessing that no one can take away from me. When I gave myself to You, I feared I would lose my reason.”

“Today, it is reason that would lose you.”

Since Saint Teresa,¹¹ He had not, that I know of, received avowals so frank. And I am very happy to play the counter-melody in this concert between so witty a believer and his divine personage.

As translator for my English edition, I had chosen Dorothy Wilde, that brilliant niece of Oscar Wilde, who prompted Wells to remark, “I finally got to meet a feminine Wilde.”¹² Max Jacob approved of my choice thus:

I have had the English poem translated into French and the translation is my text exactly. This counter-proof is decisive and worth one thousand praises to the first translator. Be my interpreter with Miss Wilde. What has been very funny is that the translator of this counter-proof is my own sister who is full of intelligence, but Jewish and anti-clerical.¹³ (I have never been able to understand how the Jews could be anti-clerical since they invented clericalism: this is to turn against oneself.)

Dear colleague,

Imagine! I had lent the *Amazon* to an occupied soldier in the armies of occupied Germany; when he returned it to me, I experienced a fresh job; I reread it all from cover to cover, and I keep this breviary of impiety within reach.¹⁴

God has this fantastically elegant way of always choosing for himself the most charming, hence the strongest, of enemies. That’s real nerve; and he’s a bit coy in doing it. Another elegant manner he has is that of having as his servants what rhymes with brasses. “The most beautiful proof of the force of the Church,” a very witty cardinal has said, “is the stupidity of its servants.”¹⁵ —That is not what I wanted to tell you. —I wanted to tell you that I will prove to you, gospels in hand, that Christianity is the

conservatory of spirit in all senses of the word: "You are the salt of the earth!"¹⁶ you, he tells you! you! And to others: "Take her as your model."¹⁷

You are right to think that I am not going to send you a written sermon. But I hasten to exhibit myself in my theosophical or neo-evangelical exercises. What happiness when I will be able to see you! (Actually, do not judge me . . . now.) I do not intend to go to Paris, because this last week I am going to have visits every day. Even this formidable charm of a genesis of Mardrus cannot (more than your simple presence . . . do you believe it?) make me contravene the decorum of hospitality.¹⁸ In our democracies the only tyrant is politeness.

So, I shall be wandering until July, and in July I shall be at Quimper in Basse-Bretagne or in the vicinity.

A thousand thanks, a thousand compliments, a thousand delicate regards and myself very humbly at your feet like a submissive admirer.

Max Jacob

A large thank you to the Baroness Franchetti and to you,¹⁹ the "Conversation" and I are very touched and flattered. In prehistoric times with great joy I knew the admirable Gertrude Stein.²⁰

Will there be a spring in Sainte-Maxime this year?²¹ One will not breathe Italian sandpaper, the pines will no longer look like verdant matches, the cork-trees like tigers sick with the plague, nor the houses like suburbanite developments in Milanese *fä-ence*. . . .

I will not leave Paris without having seen you and reseen you a hundred times.

Friendship cannot be in the future, it is by the deed that it names itself: "You would not look for me if you had not found me," says the Evangelist.²²

Friendship is faith, it is even what distinguishes it from love, which is a cosmic need. Therefore let us believe.

M. J.

11. *Doctor Jésus-Christ Mardrus*¹

Doctor Jésus-Christ Mardrus is the only man whom I address with the familiar *tu*, because for twenty-five years he has never failed for even an instant to respect me, and therefore deserves, for this and for many other reasons, this distinction.

My father, man of a single world—his own—my less discerning father, having driven me as far as Point-du-Jour where the Mardrus' then lived,² watching the doctor welcome me, his oriental eyes seemingly underlined with kohl behind his pince-nez, hesitated to leave me at the "Rose-raie," even while he drove through the Bois. He found me again with my arms full of books and roses, happy to show him my inscriptions, and animated by such a literary enthusiasm that he was reassured, although vexed that I could prefer these people to those of the society parties to which he still tried to attract me.

Quite taken with my new friends, I left him in the lurch on a yacht where a prospective fiancé³ waited for me, the two of them having arranged my presentation at the Court of England. But he reckoned without my nature which resisted him, sometimes with too much severity, right up to the end.⁴

Doctor and Mme Mardrus opened to me the world of the *Thousand and One Nights* and the world of letters. And no ambiguous, selfish, or vicious thought ever crept in. And if the doctor once proposed, in front of his wife, that I should take on

the burden of bearing a child for them, it was only to distribute the labor more equitably among us.⁵ That I should carry his child instead of his wife, whose literary work did not leave her the necessary time, seemed to him the most natural thing in the world.⁶ But my nature was once again opposed to it, and, despite my idleness and the honor that he was doing me, I had to refuse.

It is without doubt in circumstances of equal originality that Doctor Mardrus shocks ordinary men.

But doesn't one have to be pure to dare to overstep so ingeniously the proprieties, which are often founded on much less honest complexities? And if, like *Candide*, he breaks common practices, it is because they often need it.⁷

On other occasions, didn't he proceed, like a François Villon, with merry necessity?⁸ Besides, morals are made for those who do not have enough moral health to scorn them when necessary, and doesn't one have to be endowed with quite another sort of courage to refuse to conform to them?

Doctor Jésus-Christ Mardrus's misdeeds and spells are sewn with white thread, so much so that they manage to make for him a kind of cloak of innocence!

And the half-impure, the three-quarters impure, the completely impure complain, the very ones who hide themselves under ready-made clothing taken at discount from the shop-windows of totally bankrupt morals.

Through one of André Germain's pranks,⁹ Doctor Mardrus once found himself at table seated next to Mme L. M——, whom he believed to be his enemy. And from the soup onwards, feeling that he was in dangerous water, he threatened her with his other companion, myself. "This constant friend," he told her, "would pluck out the eyes of anyone who dared to look at me unkindly." Mme L. M——, amused to feel herself alluded to, questioned me. And I acknowledged that, as I was not fond of waste, before tearing out any eyes, I would first try to open them.

Another lady explained to my friend that she was afraid of him because of the evil things he said.

“I, speak evil, madame, waste my time speaking evil? If I am angry at someone, I *do* it to him.”

When I talked to him about a colleague whom I had tried to place in a job more in keeping with his needs and skill, Doctor Jésus-Christ affirmed that it was his Italian half that urged my protégé to this habit of begging, which would have everyone take care of him.

“And tell me, Blondie,¹⁰ in what way is he more interesting than someone else who doesn’t ask for things?”

Under no circumstances does Doctor Mardrus react predictably—without doubt this is what makes him so disquieting to certain people.

The preface to his *La Reine de Saba* (Queen of Sheba) eloquently states his uneasiness as an exile.¹¹ So you want to know exactly where the Orient begins? Where vulgarity ends.

I have summarized from memory, but here is Mardrus’s text (the preface to *La Reine de Saba*) in its integrity and its splendor:

But this Orient, this Asia, what, in fact, are its real borders?

The borders are of a clarity that allows for no error. Asia is where vulgarity ends and intellectual elegance begins. And the Orient is where the overflowing springs of poetry are.

Like Mahomet, this hot-tempered man prefers only singular curses:¹² in his various difficulties with foreigners who live here, he mixes in some very Parisian violence, so that they understand something about the insults that he calls down on them.

France knew what she was doing in asking him to translate the Koran.¹³

Jouvenel’s mission knew less well what it overlooked in not taking advantage of the learning of this writer and Orientalist in Syria and Egypt, to which, since then, a private mission has financed him so that from his pen, steeped in the soul of several races, the *Thousand and One Egyptian Nights* might be published.¹⁴

He has translated the Bible into a French that seems to equal the text of the scholars of the Oxford Bible, written in the time

of King James.¹⁵ If nobility of language at times seems to reside in the works of certain authors, that is because they have not coarsened it by their everyday use of it.

I have never seen Mardrus use a cliché, much less write one. He expresses himself in “suras,”¹⁶ with a positive force all his own, and nothing is franker than his laugh which plays on a perfect little keyboard, on which his mouth sometimes closes suddenly like a shocked rosebud. . . .

*The Book of the Vérité de Parole*¹⁷—this *Book of the Dead* in which each mummy, holding its heart in the palm of its hand, comes before the supreme tribunal bearing such witness to its own goodness that even the Most High Gods are won over to its cause and permit it to pass—is perhaps worthier of belief than the contrary excesses of Christian humility. Because who is worth the trouble of lying more than God? Reality is the poor woman who must be hidden or disowned in favor of divine truths. And nothing separates any more a blessed man from what he wanted to appear on earth. For those peoples with illusions, life, that ungrateful substance, tailors itself less to their likeness than to its own reversed reflections.

A country is known better through a person than through a trip.

And I am grateful to Doctor J.-C. Mardrus for this lengthy, amusing, and occasionally stormy friendship, which put me so intimately in touch with the Orient!

12. *The Critical State of André Rouveyre*¹

The amazon bounds into the midst of the carnage.²

André Rouveyre follows his lights with as much fervor as a medieval monk (or a modern scholar!).

All three serve what they believe to be their vocation.

All three would suffer martyrdom for their statements: one for his faith, the others for their good faith.

And it is no less courageous to rely only on oneself.

To have as one's own a base so solid as to dispense with that of others demands an examination of conscience more rigorous than the confessional could ever inflict.

I cannot imagine a more arduous road than that of Brother André, that unbelieving pilgrim—who proceeds, he and his development, toward the Nothingness to which he offers the variety of his decomposition.

Even the Venusberg, or the Gynaecium,³ which he caricatures in order to liberate himself from it, no more detains him than a person who protects himself in some other way from temptations of the flesh. He produces these verbal distortions with his draftsman's pen and presents us with a personage lacking all charm.

But let those who have a complaint about his cruelty of vision know that he wounds them only through himself.

And if some simple-hearted beauty offers herself to him, he sharpens on her the swords of his truths, and, if this “jewel heart” persists, he consents to cut thereon a new facet with each heartbeat.

What monks, in multiplying tortures, have inflicted or undergone such a discipline?

Whereas Brother André executes with ardor and detail, I half toy, I half spare—often to keep the other half for later. Where I scratch a warning in my victim, he bites a chunk out, and so has a piece of dead meat to dispose of.

And what good could the “pound of flesh” do Shylock—if that was all that would be left in his hands?⁴ And if one finishes off his victim outright, how can one exercise that superior punishment: watching him live!

But here it is not a question of punishment, but of rendering justice. At times let us be Portia—the mediatrix.

It is the intransigence, the impunity of assertions that reveal to us the chink in the armor. Isn't the chink in the armor the armor itself?

As passions succeed one another, it will soon be up to mysticism to combat this rigidity and run it through.

All the absolutes finally succumb and begin to resemble one another.

If André Rouveyre were so interested in Baltasar Gracián, it is perhaps because he saw himself in that severe mirror.⁵

And how did that monk-courtier end, if not by renouncing mistakes which affirm in favor of those that console?

Before capitulating like the proud blessed in heaven, we consider everything through the humours of our blood, which could never be a pure light.

Our bodies prevent us from being precision instruments. Besides, a mechanization or a more absolute spiritualization of our being would either lack breadth or be premature.

Mired in error, we strive for those lights that occasionally

save us from our lot in life even as our efforts determine the value of our fate. And shouldn't we recognize a superman by the flexibility of his strong qualities rather than by the rigidity of his refutable opinions?

André Rouveyre seems convinced of this, when, in his latest work, a critique of new values, he admits: "All of our motives are too fragile for anybody who uses them as a base to win over others, not to become by that very fact suspect as to the solidity of his own base."⁶

In fact, doubt seems the only purity for those who are too fervent to deny, and too lucid to affirm.

And which of us, through his personal spirit, has insights sound enough to become universal? Our prejudices, our antipathies, are our natural defenses against what we could not assimilate. That others should find food therein is still a matter of constitution. There are prescribed tastes, certainly, but of what importance to those on whom they are imposed, since thereby they have proven themselves beneath a choice? Snobbism is created for those who must be content with ready-made values.

Rouveyre writes that he "scarcely likes to work where there is nothing that can move or comfort him."⁷

Indeed, he perhaps should not, in the six columns following this remark, have limited himself to an invective, with an art all his own, against what he does not admire.*

It is unfortunate that a bile which at first is so nuanced proceeds to spoil everything, when Rouveyre quotes a fragment of pure poetry, which could well have been considered poor as much for its rhyming adjectives placed next to each other as for its stale imagery! . . . He could have chosen at random from among the verses, whose cloudy edifice he wished to demolish and found better examples of pure poetry.

But one is no freer of his associations than of his heredities. And if, as Milosz assures him, "every illness is a confession by

*"Paul Valéry's Expulsion Address," *Crapouillot*, November 1927. [NCB's note]⁸

the body,"⁹ many prejudices are warnings of an impending crisis.

How many writers, to cite only Carlyle, have been pathological cases,¹⁰ and owed to their condition, if not their style, at least their manner of seeing.

Does André Rouveyre arrive at his "distortions" through an actual feverish impulse?

In a second attack, "Mauvaises Nouvelles littéraires" (Bad Literary News), he exposes his victim better by surrounding him with followers who deliver him to us without good defenders.¹¹ This is what happens when merchants of glory are so inferior to what they sell.

Another example: Rouveyre's joust with Doctor J.-C. Mar-drus—I was less displeased to see them sharpen their weapons against one another, since they proved in single combat the excellence of their reciprocal metal.*

But where Valéry is the first to suffer for having been so violently kicked upstairs, let us leave him to recover from the bruises inflicted by his glory, without adding more poison to the repercussions.¹³

And it is not so easy as one believes to be "that lady who humbles while seemingly wishing to elevate, who steps on people when seemingly wishing to honor, . . . secret Neronian satisfaction," † not at all, her feeling is not dulled to the point of taking delight only in massacres and of not preferring to them—like André Rouveyre himself—a sympathetic terrain where the best of her work can flourish. The entire book treating of *Le reclus et le retors* (The Recluse and the Sly One) is of such consummate mastery that it is unfortunate that he should give it up in favor of polemics, whose only interest is that which the reader brings to them.¹⁵ That there have been abuses, no one can be unaware . . .

* *Mercure de France*. [NCB's note]¹²

† Quoted from an article by Rouveyre on Valéry: "Mauvaises Nouvelles littéraires," December 1927. [NCB's note]¹⁴

If his enthusiasm for Gide, "The Sly One," eventually peters out, involuntarily benefiting Gourmont, the "Recluse," who inevitably wins in this long-distance race because of his endurance and the variety of his resources, Rouveyre persists in holding up his chosen hero, Gide, to such a height that he exhausts his strength in supporting him. As though by a levitation of sorts, having put him above his contemporaries, he will have to lower him back to his place, which is certainly a better balance for them both.

Rouveyre's opinion of Gide is well known, but what does Gide think of Rouveyre?

That I spoke of France as others will in twenty years; that my views had a unique shrewdness; that what I said about Barrès was everything that Gide believed perfectly accurate; that one had never yet said that; that my judgment, as severe as it was, was tempered by such a love that it occasionally derived pathetic accents from me; likewise, he further wrote, I anticipated contemporary judgments.¹⁶

The homage that Rouveyre renders Gide seems to have settled the latter's hesitation. Formerly when I told him of my admiration for Rouveyre's written work, *Souvenirs de mon commencement* (Memoirs of My Business), which had just been published,¹⁷ Gide did not seem to appreciate it, or rather not having tasted it, did he not want to seem? . . . Julien Benda summed up Gide for me in one sentence: "It is my opinion, I do not share it."¹⁸ And afterwards Gide and I were preoccupied at the end of that summer afternoon with enormous eclairs that a servant, unaccustomed to my service, had just placed in front of us with the tea. Tea shared by Vincent O'Sullivan who, having declared that he wanted to translate one of Gide's books, seemed, when asked to reach an agreement with the author, to prefer none of them.¹⁹ Often, everything in Gide's presence underlines his impropriety or his discomfort.

I extracted myself from this difficult situation by entrusting him with a word from the Berensons, in Florence, whom I knew to be his proven admirers.²⁰ And in response I received a charmed

word about the invasion Gide made, with a youthful band, into the gardens of "Il Tatti."

In Rouveyre's last work, where everything crawls with its own noxious weeds or flies on its own wings, one has the sense of a universe well in place, with Rouveyre as the perfect arranger. There he surpasses himself, there and in his constant incisiveness and his friendly spontaneity.

I have a weakness for this strong man who will himself perhaps have the weakness not to pardon me for having exposed him, as he exposes others to the careful rigors of a judgment that nevertheless is as valuable as all praises.

Neither he nor I am a good weaver of garlands as we are already disgusted ahead of time with the wilting flowers that generally can be expected to compose them. What of fresh flowers?

To conclude in the manner in which he spoke to me about his youth: "And what difference can this aesthetic claptrap make to us?"

13. *Paul Valéry: The Dawn of an Academician: An Attempt at Clarification*¹

Initiated, as one of Valéry's followers, at the evening with M Teste at a time when this famous evening had no morning after, I, along with others, deplored that this poet, contrary to the practices of the world of letters, constantly fathered children but never poems.² He had just announced anew the birth of a "little maiden girl."³ This prolific paternity—which, combined with his parsimony as a writer, seemed to destine him to double poverty—caused his friends more alarm than was warranted.

With them he became, if not an habitué, at least an intimate of my home.

Generous with ideas that he had not yet written, apparently as much a dilettante as I, our conversations became our works, outlines on the tablets of bright midnights. He brought a remarkable attention to our conversations, and continued them or followed them toward endless ramifications, to which each of us took pride in adding ideas leading even further. . .

Even in wartime, this game was worth the candle.

For a time I was living near our friend Louÿs.⁴ Valéry had only to wind around my rue des Vignes on his way there, or coming back from the hamlet of Boulainvilliers:

What! It's the route to the Vineyards
That under cover of winter
You take to flee my verses?
But though unworthy of you
Here they are, choir determined
To sing for Miss Barney!
30 December 1917

This frivolous dedication brought me *Aurore*, along with the manuscript of *l'Insinuant* (Insinuation), which I enjoyed translating into English verse. Then came *La Jeune Parque* (The Young Fate).⁵

Our entire little circle in the sixteenth arrondissement met to hear it read by Francis de Miomandre, that Ariel of letters, that discoverer of marvels,⁶ one evening when our caution did not bring us together under the train station of the Boulainvilliers line, or in the secret passage under the bastions of the park belonging to the Duchess C. T.⁷

These decameron⁸ relaxed our spirits from the events over which we had not even the power of total detachment.

Paris, Monday, 8 January 1928
Mademoiselle,

I am ill. Very annoyed to be so. A thousand times still more annoyed at not seeing you because of this ill condition.

I can no longer endure this stupid climate. My mind is like a sweet dessert frozen—and ruined. It is no longer at all a question of *Aurore!*⁹

Therefore, I will not come to see you right now, I will not go to Pierre's house (and I ask that you tell him so), and I will continue to be a hundred years old by my fire—if it is a fire.

For consolation I have only a line written in your letter: Toward these other colors which our shadows contain.

This is a very lovely line.

If you want to make me happy, add to this solitary line several to equal it. . . .

For your New Year's gift I send you a short air I hummed last summer and which I enclose with this letter.

I also enclose all the respect needed to make a true friendship work.

Paul Valéry

Not many months after the armistice, I took the *Crise de l'esprit* (Spiritual Crisis) to the country, to Bar Harbor, my home, where this letter followed me:¹⁰

Paris, Thursday, 11 August 19——

Dear Miss Barney,

What is this temple? Art Building is not a very attractive name. I prefer the temple of Friendship.

Do you know that I am stupendously bored here. Absolute heat. Closed brain. Music always cancelled.

But you say not a word about yourself.

Always, even in Maine,
She is shut up in her vial
This Natalie inhumane. . . .
(Who considers it as a bad job
Not being on the rue Jacob.)

I am nevertheless very curious to have your impressions of the Atlantic and of America.

Observe well your . . . heart, over there, and see the figure we make there. What effect do we have in Maine? It is a good experience to be considered from so far, in another world, like a Caribbean or Polynesian work brought here. Sometimes, in writing, I picture to myself a reader seated under an unknown light, in an easy chair of unimaginable shape, in a kiosk erected on the rock of some entirely different planet. How can I affect that fellow? At that point one sweeps his thought, one pointlessly paws his words.

And that is just the opposite of what he should do. Boileau

tried out his products on his cook.¹¹ It was in this way that he became so remarkable!

Patience, Miss Barney, patience in Maine. Anything is better than Paris in the heat, where I wither away and turn into powder.

I kiss your hands, coolness.

P. V.

Upon my return to the rue Jacob from America, I discovered Paul Valéry as encumbered with work as formerly he had been with studious freedom.

Monday

Dear Miss Barney,

No, not dinner, not this week. These days I am worn out.

For the sonnets, I will come to see you Thursday, around 2:30, if that is not inconvenient.

Forgive me, I talk like a slave, I am so encumbered. Someone presses, someone argues within my poor self.

You know what? I think I'll have you do some work for me. Just you wait!

Your dazed,

P. V.

This work concerned the translation of the *Soirée avec monsieur Teste* (The Evening with Monsieur Teste), with which Valéry wanted to approach the new world.¹²

I did this work with a reserve of scarcely expended ardor and with the best English remaining to me. In order to weigh each sentence of my translation in Valéry's presence, I took him in my cab to the Bois;¹³ stopping in a quiet path, I read him the sentence in which I had permitted myself a little boldness in view of the viability of the whole. He approved. But what happens in many marriages based on love happened as I translated: I sacrificed an infatuation to a familiarity that left me only a

cooled work upon its completion. This cohabitation had killed all the magic between me and the man called Teste. I suppose that happens to translators who espouse a work too tightly. . . Did the Chinese gentleman who has just translated *Monsieur Teste* for China have this impression, which would draw us together?

When I had finished the translation (the weather being too nasty, and Paul Valéry too ill for our drives in the Bois), I went to his home in the rue de Villejust to give it to him. We settled ourselves at a writing table in a recess under a lamp, at our feet the electric heater I had brought him, and our heads bent over these proofs which awaited only our "for press." Through the closed doors around the living-room I heard the coughs of three generations: on our right, some grandparent announced a restive insomnia; alongside, a child woke up, to cry, to cough, and then to fall back asleep. In front of us could barely be heard the quiet cough of the vigilant wife.

Valéry told me: "I tried to get some servants' quarters on the sixth floor as a study, but a maid beat me to it!"

A little while later, the *Dial* introduced him to intellectuals in the United States.

Tuesday

Dear Miss Barney,

Thank you for that scented note. But I am still not traveling about at night. And I am still so wretched, so overwhelmed!

What's more, very great worries have befallen me. I was planning to leave for the Midi, to recover. But my trip has been delayed, and I must ponder, with a very tired head, the most serious things. I have received the *Dial*, in which our old friend Teste appears. Poor Teste. But still thank you for your translation.

My kindest regards to you, and I am all yours.

P. V.

Valéry had his first dollars; then a note from Middleton Murry, who, admiring his work, suggested making it into a booklet in

England, for which he would write an introduction. This project was lost from view during the summer, or, rather, another translator insidiously won the author's too good will.* This incident enabled me to know Paul Valéry's nature better; he is so adaptable to circumstances that they leave their mark on him (rather than the reverse).

Monday

Villa Saint-Pierre, Perros-Guirec (Cotes-du-Nord).¹⁵

How, where, when, and what, Miss Barney? But I, still here for the next few days, bathe, dive, and am bored. The sea is so beautiful, and all these islands without Sappho!¹⁶ I am always sad enough, dark and down. And I neither long to stay nor to return. There it is. Stupidity is my fortissimo.¹⁷ I am all yours.

Edmond Teste

Saturday

What has happened to you, dear Barney? Poor Mr. Teste is always sad and ill. I have been shut in for twenty days, forbidden to speak, which is good; but forbidden to smoke, which is terrible.

Give me some news about yourself. It has been so long since I saw you. But why see an old bawling fool who is sadder than . . . I don't know what.

I kiss your hands, a little like Salomon.¹⁸

P. V.

*Mr. Davis (the second translator of *Une soirée avec monsieur Teste*) has signally failed. . . . The version is literal . . . Its baffling of the reader is complete. I do not find the thinnest indication that he has sympathetically entered into the speculative kingdom of his author. With Mr. Davis's translation in my hand, as it were, I came upon Miss Barney's version of *Une soirée avec monsieur Teste*. This is an admirable version, supple, free and sensitive. Miss Barney gives every evidence of having probed to the centre of M Valéry's thought. (Pierre Loving, *Evening Post*). [NCB's note]¹⁴

Thursday

Dear Miss Barney,

Last Tuesday, I saw our master Pierre [Louÿs]; and after diverse reproofs, kind regards, and remarks, I told him that you had considered going in a party to invade his hamlet on Friday, 14 February next.

But you would do well to confirm this agreement with him

I am still delighted with the evening spent with Mme de C. T. and yourself, last Saturday.¹⁹ I have very voluptuously reread your verses, which must, without fail, be gathered for us into the best printed collection in the world. I solemnly pledge to assist you with the correction of the proofs, if I am not unworthy of putting my savage hands on them.

As for my own work, it now lacks fervor, consequence, and charm. I do not like this damp cold which eventually inhabits me intimately. On the one hand, verses are beginning to bore me, for the bit of an orgy that I have just had of them, these last few years; but I do not yet have the courage, on the other hand, to return to the singular delights of analysis and to the interminable operations of precision.

Dear Miss Barney, I am very respectfully yours.

P. V.

Pleased with having introduced Paul Valéry to the New World, I wanted to make my friends in Paris appreciate him. So I fêted the new poet. Here are some fragments from the article André Germain devoted to this small party, in the *Ere nouvelle* for 12 June 1920:²⁰

Like all genuine triumphs, this one illuminated only a very narrow room and some thirty of the faithful. . . .

Thus, Friday, Natalie Clifford Barney gave a party in honor of Paul Valéry. What dwelling would have been worthier than this Regency pavilion, fallen asleep at the edge of ancient glories, to honor the greatest poet of the day? . . .

I lingered near the mistress of the house. Will I be able to point out those who came in while I observed her, the visitors of both sexes who, presence and not mob, wave and not flood, came little by little to animate the quiet salon, completely haunted with flowers? The women's faces are almost all seductive: young foreigners, a Polish lady so finely drawn; a very pale American lady with beautiful features bathed by the moon and with the air of Pierrot's betrothed;²¹ an adorably frail Belgian lady who rises suddenly with a fairy's dignity and whom we won't be astonished to see flying off over the irises; . . . finally, the citizens of the nameless land of exquisite Old Age, ladies elderly but always fresh; Natalie's very young mother²² chatting affably with the marvelous Marchioness of Anglesey,²³ whose surviving beauty attests to the court of Queen Victoria and reproduces the impeccable profile of the Empress Eugénie.²⁴ . . .

The two faithful male habitués, M Salomon Reinach and M Seignobos,²⁵ cause the august shadow of science to weigh on these frivolous heads. Unfortunately absent is Aman-Jean,²⁶ whose sensitive finesse and courtesy seem inseparable from the delights of this place. There is no transition between these men of established fame and the literature of tomorrow, symbolized by the two directors of noisy revues: Florent Fels and Louis Aragon²⁷—two pitches in an over-excited scale. With the sharp and incisive Aragon I begin a discussion that, quickly, will enthrall me.

Palme, Anne, Aurore, and Narcisse: such is the selection to which the author and the hostess here contributed. When the verses begin to resound, she stations herself, upright, at the threshold of the room, like the two-faced genie of welcome and vigilance,²⁸ who will welcome the latecomers while protecting the poems; but the other, Valéry, draws back and disappears, all folded in on himself, in his discretion, completely effaced by the demands of his intense modesty. . . .

Little by little, one becomes accustomed to this milieu, which is so foreign to us, and yet akin to what is best, to what is most original, to what is most exiled in ourselves. Along the pure slopes of French tradition, from Mallarmé to Malherbe, and from Corneille to Ronsard,²⁹ from snow to cloud, from summit to abyss, from paroxysm to heroism, the spirit rises up to the dear and incredible traces of an indelible antiquity.

Each poem has its diamond and each god his legendary crown. In a temple, what should be preferred? *Anne* is the acknowledgment of

carnal splendor, the key, trembling in the hands that deliver it, of the very treasure of feminine beauty.

. . . I still have *Narcisse* to comment on, about which I will speak even more inadequately; is it because I appreciate it more? . . .

Despite this foresight, André Germain can understand nothing either of music or of poetry. He has and can have only defensive talents, but his excessive shrewdness prompts him to record future attacks against which he already seems to defend himself beforehand. And this same shrewdness allows him to hear the bell-ring of a future glory.

He has always seemed to me to be among those—I also make this judgment from his own apoetically poetic work—who are competent to understand only through those clichés that stir atavistic sentiments of which they are the weak trustees. In this instance, he perceived the sound of the bell I was waiting for. I realized that these poems about Nymphs, about Narcissus, all those hazy nudes, could represent, even for a group of people of the world, decorative panels that were slightly obscured but assimilable to their past—a past that had accepted Mallarmé.³⁰

The poems of Paul Valéry were finding their first audience. Those are at present legion who, still less qualified to appreciate him, think all the more highly of him.

In all fairness to them, they no longer can become infatuated except with what is over their heads.

Others, more sincere, lose their tempers. To one such person I was trying my best to explain the accuracy of his limitations: a new juxtaposition of words, an assemblage of unusual thoughts leave them justifiably dumbfounded. A clear sentence is not understood, because the words comprising it are not those which the ear traditionally expects. These people are deaf to everything that has not been repeated for half a century. They believe only in assertions that are threadbare to the point of improbability. They follow a backward path, their heads turned toward the past and stumbling over everything that would oppose their backward march.³¹

Thus it is unexpected luck when a poet of “obscure genre”

happens to force himself, not on their intelligence, but on their snobbery.

I use the word luck, but did I really want to say luck?

Paul Valéry's stock is beginning to rise, but he was still not so popular that he couldn't take an interest in poets other than himself.

Sunday

Dear friend,

Friday is fine, and "the other Mardrus."³²

I am very curious to hear what our Amande has done with Poe's poems. Have the English text and Mallarmé's, if possible.

Helen, thy beauty is to me.³³

Lord! How beautiful this little poem is.

As for Berenson, I myself do not know what I could send him! Some Leonardo to drive him mad.³⁴

Receive the melancholy and assured regards of a monsieur horribly Teste—not enough!

Thursday

Dear Miss Barney,

I regret that I cannot come to see you tomorrow. My day is entirely tied up, and the plan I had formed to go to the rue Jacob must be put back in a corner of my brain.

As for my lecture on Wednesday, I do not think I can introduce our friend's translations there, because this chat has no connection with poetry, but only with the "philosophy" of Poe.

There will be no recitation, but a gloomy, severe, and dry account of ideas, principally of those in *Eureka*.³⁵

But as I greatly desire to assist our poetess Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, whom I esteem and whom I have loved for many years, I will do my best to urge the devotees I know to subscribe.

I thank M O'Sullivan for his dispatch.³⁶ I did not plan to speak, either, on the life of Edgar Poe, but I find in this article that he sent me elements that may help me in my intellectual

analysis of your greatest man. I will use them, and I will acknowledge the source of this new information.

If you want to take me riding some evening in the Bois, I will be very pleased at this good fortune. Fresh air, shade, and friendship are good things.

I kiss your hands as ardently as would be done in the old days.

P. V.

Dear Barney,

I want to give myself the pleasure of telling you to what degree the small dinner last evening seemed to me delightfully arranged. I have the memory of a very pretty thing, with or without the doves, because animals, even the whitest ones, are not my strong point. But the old pearl-colored room, the very pure bear, your slightly mournful ermine, and such very pleasant ladies, our J. C. —, ³⁷ everything, in short, was made to ravish me, even the wonderful absence of S — (whom I like, incidentally, from time to time!).

I was nevertheless not very fresh; a man of ashes, at bottom! and of an essentially melancholy humor.

I write to you, moreover, somewhat out of gratitude, much out of egoism, to recall a little of last night, and to flee tonight. What boredom, what disgusts are mine! I have spent my life concealing from myself the aforementioned life with intellectual walls. In short, I am a free liver, with regard to ideas. I have slept with an inconceivable number of ideas, and I seem blasé about thought. But it is useless to bore you with all this, and the remainder no longer concerns you.

Ah! how I would also so like to be an Amazon! I have burned both my breasts. ³⁸ I believed that consuming them would benefit my brains! . . . But they are growing back in!

Thanks again, dear Barney, throttle your turtledoves with a sweet smile and innocent hands: there will always be too many left!

A thousand regards from that absurd

E. Teste

Vence, Alpes-Maritimes, La Collinette.³⁹

Dear friend Barney,

Here I receive verses and appointments. The appointment is fruitless, the verses are not, but very lovely and curiously lovely.

The first eight-line stanza is truly precious—"enlarge the facets"—excellent. The "clear movement" is not mine, but yours.⁴⁰ The only movements I have are obscure.

Correct this: "Carry it to your forehead," and take out this "polarize." Take off!

I see that Love still inspires you and that is very fine. If it existed, it would be the only thing to be interested in in this very unknown world where we live as if we understood something about it.

I am fiddling with the Narcissus. I daub some canvases or cardboards. I look at the blue sky which is gray. I write down useless ideas, and I play with a large dog before daybreak.

Alas, alas! My kindest regards to you.

P. V.

This letter shows me why Valéry is a prodigious artist but not a true poet; he does not believe in love, in the laws of love that are connected to us as those of light and blood. He lacks that faith which supplants all others.

Finding me gifted on that subject, he prompted me to talk about it with one of his friends, Mme Bourdet-Pozzi, who had likewise invited Mme de Régnier.⁴¹ But I do not know if I was able to reveal something to them that they were not already aware of, perhaps this beautiful saying of a sufi:⁴² "What did you understand from the sound of the lute and the flute? You are my everything, you are my sufficiency, Love!"

Valéry had just uncoiled "The Serpent."⁴³

He uses his brain, he abuses it; worries enter it, and since his worries find him, as on Job, they multiply and attack furiously:

Dear Miss Barney,

Your words are sweet to read. I will come Friday, at the time indicated, to thank you for them. If the body permits it.

In two words, here are the “worries” of the aforementioned Teste: The Old Man of the Mountain, who was a principal source of life, is dead.⁴⁴

This event, always fearsome and feared, has not failed to occur at the worst moment, at the moment when I am weakened by several months of detestable health, and finally by this last month of severe illness. You know that I have hardly been sleeping! one, two hours a night, for the past fifty days. That is infernal in itself; but now, embellished with gloomy spiritual vapors and adorned with indiscreet questions about the future, it is the permanent unbearable situation.

In short, I am low, and facing a life of rebuilding.

I was going to leave for the azure of the P-L-M advertisements⁴⁵ when this blow of the guillotine (but the guillotine is more elegant) cut my hope in two. Would I leave? Wouldn't I leave? I have the greatest need to leave to recover *my* self, *my* sleep, *my* head. . . . But the uncertainty of tomorrow chains me here, since it would follow me! . . .

And it chains me, for nothing!

All this is for you, a secret offering of my hells to the friendship I bring you and which you are so willing to welcome as a friend. . . . Au revoir, your

E. T.

It was at this time that M Valéry had, for a poet (formed, it is true, at the Agence Havas),⁴⁶ the sufficiently novel idea of putting his literary worth into a joint-stock company. Volunteer brokers flew from salon to salon, brandishing subscription forms. A small company of some twenty bibliophiles was then established which could be certain of receiving without exception all of M Valéry's books in a special format, and which supplied an annual income to the “pure poet.” Unable, in a Republic,

to solicit a pension as he could have done under a king, M Valéry did not hesitate to put his genius into shares, carefully collecting the coupons.*

How can I ever believe in the financial craftiness of which Paul Valéry is accused, since this scheme was not his, but mine!⁴⁸

I acknowledge it in all humility, because, when one is mistress of an idea at the starting line, one does not know how it will behave at the finish. But, at that moment, action tempted me more than philosophy. I found with Paul Valéry himself that there was an urgency to draw him out of financial trouble.

Paul Valéry, looking for an intellectual reason in everything, found none in his difficulties. This was not the time to explain to him one of my favorite beliefs, which is contained in this savage summary:

Bad luck = Clumsiness

But realizing that writers of quality, who are neither pornographers nor adventurers nor “potboilers,” never manage to live by their profession, I worked up a scheme concerning them that was to consist of having them earn at least as much as their colleagues in the liberal professions: the painters and sculptors. As deluxe editions are not a sure means of bringing the author as much as the sale of a painting or a sculpture, it was necessary to invent something else.

I allow myself to be an American. The New World exports its practical sense and throws a light—be it only the light of money—on such situations, and breaks that old European reserve, repressive to the point of bitterness when finances are concerned.

Excited, I groped in the absurd; I wished to form:

An intellectual, international elite, an understanding across diverse languages. Sympathy, wireless telegraphy, receptivity to

*“Le Génie commercial de Monsieur Paul Valéry” (The Commercial Genius of M Paul Valéry), by Gaultier-Boissiere, *le Crapouillot*, Christmas 1927. [NCB’s note]⁴⁷

similarities and differences in the great family of minds situated beyond borders. Civilization erected on the only right remaining to it, that of expressing itself, of disclaiming the blunders and downfalls, past and future, of those who cannot represent it.

To support oneself until such time as one can achieve recognition. To be "more than a town, a name."⁴⁹

To project those names that give a country and an era importance, that cause their energy to be released and their excellence to be proved. Let them speak since they alone can renew speech, can animate it, can make it durable, can stamp it on developing minds.

Let's save the tabernacle in which a people's essence, its very supremacy, survives; let's carry it through the deserts. Among our diversified duties, this one is, above all, sacrosanct; it is also the most self-serving. But it is difficult to include so lofty a selfishness among so many immediate ones.

Did kings, who chose writers capable of prolonging and enhancing their royal prestige, did the patrons of the past, really know the wise speculation they were making?

Are there still patrons for writers? Are we interested in them to the point of making it easier for them to stay alive so that their work may benefit? I question that vulnerable part of the being, that modern appendix of weights and measures, the leather wallet, the checkbook, which has certainly become the most sensitive and the most tended organ of the human make-up, though it is all too little human!

Is there an elite capable of surrounding and protecting those who honor it? Are we still an active elite? Or is our admiration a sham, snobbism?

"I would like so much to do something for the arts, for the talent of X." Would that only be a ventriloquist's cry coming from no one knows where?

Or else are we a small sincere number of readers and writers joined together by the laws of exchange? Are we two indispensable parts of the one whole? And do we want the creative side, which is expressive of ourselves, to exist and be our spokesman?

If we do, let's use the best minds, let's assist them to come forward for us. Let's not leave them to sink into material concerns, which are not meant for them. Let them be consumed in the most efficient way, to their best production, so that we can profit from them!

Because certain artists unquestionably find in a double craft a development of their talent and a use for their vigor, we want to bring our attention only to the contrary case. There are also those who lack sufficient talent to devote themselves to it exclusively. In many cases, a difficult liaison with the muse is of greater value than a marriage.

One must use up a great deal of wisdom in managing genius!

Furthermore, the true muse of the writer is the reader, the receptive part of himself where he assays his discoveries, a predestined passivity that he fertilizes with his spirit. This liaison is stimulating to them both.

Because the exchange between patron and artist is less direct now than formerly, it is losing its servile and obligatory aspect. There is a greater chance for union.

Let's bring about this union through a collective patronage exercised in favor of writers who deserve to be chosen. And let us show ourselves worthy of our preferences, let us assume the responsibility for them by some act of faith and of form that binds us to one another.

I propose to the Board a subscription plan. Let those sign up who wish to become stockholders, that is, the patrons of this intellectual wealth.

Then, since Paul Valéry seemed to me a typical case and the time seemed right, I defined my plan to make a first test of it on him:

For the fine mind, there is literature.

Recognizing that there are no more "patrons" for writers, that the public generally supports only literature at its own level, that the "Prizes" are useful only for a time, we, friends of literature, have resolved to found an association, pledging ourselves annually to subscribe thirty shares at 500 francs, thereby raising 15,000 francs a year to

be handed over to the selected author. (If necessary, five people may divide one share.)

Shareholders in a mind—a mine which they hope will be productive of intellectual riches—liberate, for everyone’s benefit, a proven talent, and one giving solid guarantees.

Moreover, isn’t it rather the purview of this new type of stockholder to speculate on intellects than on other, equally mysterious commercial enterprises?

Still to be determined is the way this joint patronage will guarantee the production of a work of which it declares itself to be the exacting consumer.

It is henceforth agreed that the author will offer, to his underwriters, by way of dividends, the first fruits of his informal talks, and his writings; he will likewise give an offprint of each edition to be published, printed with their name, the manuscript being drawn by lots, each shareholder having as many chances as he has shares, etc.

The shares are payable from now up to 15,000 francs a year.

A stockholder can transfer his shares, but he remains responsible for them vis-à-vis the Board.

If the sum of 15,000 francs is exceeded, the surplus will be voted in favor of a second candidate, a third, etc.:

Membership:

(Sign and return to M Paul Valéry,
40, rue de Villejust, Paris, XVIe.)

I, the undersigned, pledge to subscribe _____ shares (each share consisting of an annual payment of 500 francs, in the name of M Paul Valéry), M Paul Valéry being required to render to the Board an account of the sums received.

I likewise pledge, in the event of forced cancellation, to guarantee to the Association another subscriber who will continue the annual payments.

Signature: _____

Address: _____

The American poet Ezra Pound, always generous toward his often ungrateful colleagues, was also excited about this plan, and we dreamed of communicating it to the universe.

My Temple to Friendship was to be its sanctuary.

Ezra Pound wanted to nominate Eliot to the candidacy of the cross-Channel enterprise, so we drew up a document similar to the one I submitted to Paul Valéry, and chose for his Board Richard Aldington and May Sinclair, two writers who earned their living as he did, at the too-little-remunerated hard labor of literature.⁵⁰

Our first candidates, Valéry and Eliot, felt fairly apprehensive, I believe, about this initiative. It was rather their resistance than that of the subscribers we had to overcome; Valéry found less frightening dinner-parties whose guests paid to hear him develop themes. Why not a pianist's fee!

He had perhaps had a presentiment of the reproach that would be given him six years later:

Wednesday

Dear Miss Barney,

I will come on Friday about 3 to bring you the verses of *Narcisse* and to express my gratitude to you.

I will come at 3 in order to find you alone, and, besides, I have business a bit later.

Your short document strikes me as very good, and the idea of the informal talks pleases me completely, because the idea of pure subscriptions rather distresses me.

We will also think of Versailles and the rue de l'Odéon.⁵¹ But as for the ball tomorrow, Narcissus is too tired already today. He still has the strength to kiss your wrist, amazon!

Edm. T.

"Taking care of Valéry" had become the watchword for a complete release of the human mechanism. Having asked literary and social circles to take part, I received, among others, a reply from "la Maison des amis des livres."⁵² Adrienne Monnier would organize a similar group on her side. . . . Since we had "the admirable idea of creating a movement that commanded attention, this group was going to resume its efforts, but it did not believe it was possible to merge with us, its friends being

rather artists and academics without large resources, who would not be able to participate to the extent agreed on," etc.

I had already put together a list of subscribers for Paul Valéry, and another of those waiting until an author was chosen whom they preferred to him, when I received a note from his friend Lucien Fabre, who had "something urgent to tell me about Paul Valéry."⁵³

Lucien Fabre was waiting for me. Flushed with his importance he set forth for me the desire of others of Paul Valéry's friends, as well as of the *Nouvelle Revue française*, to take the enterprise I had formed and relieve me of its leadership, so that *they* could bring it to a successful conclusion.

"What about my subscribers?" Several had already been notified and agreed with him. "The others," I said, "could perhaps immediately nominate a second candidate, since the first one is seen to be doing so well. Let's see . . . there would be Fargue."⁵⁴

Then, jokingly, I added, "Or why not you, Monsieur Fabre?"

M Fabre puffed up his chest: "Of course . . ." and left my salon full of his own noise, behind him a smile he did not see.

A few days later we received a note from Gallimard.⁵⁵ He had seen M Fabre again: "It was agreed that they would personally take care of giving M Paul Valéry the means to proceed with his work."

That rivalry was a more effective stimulant than admiration or friendship in no way surprised me. I therefore rejoice that those who should be are excited about it.

Then a letter arrived from the Princess B——,⁵⁶ my countrywoman and chief subscriber, asking me to have lunch with her, at Versailles. There I encountered Valéry, Fabre, Fargue, Larbaud, Cocteau, Gallimard, etc.⁵⁷ No doubt I already knew of Fabre's idea for Valéry, an idea which, she wasn't forgetting, would never have been born without me, etc.

Then another letter from the same lady, joined with Gallimard's, finally reassured me. The Gallimard plan, "to assist Valéry to the sum of 15,000 francs a year, had come true."

I suppose that—in releasing me—they have kept their word for ever and ever. That what is necessary should be done without me corresponds so well to my designs that I took complete satisfaction in letting them take charge of it.

The repercussions were already being felt. Lady R—— has been a patron of letters longer than her junior, Princess B——, who previously was completely devoted to the plastic arts, and only amused herself slightly with literature.⁵⁸ Lady R——, without doubt driven by the plan concerning her co-citizen Eliot, created for, against, and with him, a new review in London, *The Criterion* (which she just as imprudently abandoned), before Princess B——, for her part, gave up her *Commerce* in Paris.⁵⁹ One is allowed to repent of a bad action, but it is sometimes dangerous to one's own prestige to renounce a good action.

It is thus that a poet had to mark the step to fortune that had been imprudently disturbed for him. His worries had been succeeded by a series of benefits without moderation.

He arrived at my home one Friday, after his election to the Académie, in the midst of Antheil's music, which I had arranged to have played because I wanted to be abrupt with the traditional mawkishness of New Year's Day.⁶⁰

I guided Paul Valéry toward a divan. I had something like the impression that he had just given birth to a baby!

Another time he apologized for coming late, or for not coming, saying, "The Académie had not even given him an 'immortal automobile.'" Would an "immortal automobile" replace Pegasus?

Valéry will perhaps write fewer verses. He draws too much on his old supply to leave us with the hope of a continuation. Editions succeed themselves in inverse proportion to their excellence (we are down to his rough drafts uncorrected at dawn, etc.). The paper gains in value what the text loses. But it is rather up to the buying public than to his colleagues and other publishers to complain about it. And when he exploits his snobism rather than his vices, isn't he exploiting the public for its own good?

And when a hermetic poet makes for once a world tour,* let's reserve our grey mien for those who usurp an illegitimate celebrity, since they flatter the common taste—which also, for once, has been unable to impose itself as much as it is imposed on!

I would hate to appear to help burn what I had helped to be adored! His song has been too near me for me to join with either his detractors or his devotees.

What does either group matter? Between the bear's paving-stone and his hug . . .⁶¹

Did they have to impose lecturing on this sedentary man who

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Switzerland: Count Gonzague de Reynold: *Eupalinos et la Barbare*. Doctor Max Rychner: *Notes sur Edmond Teste* (in French and German). Translation of the *Log-Book of Monsieur Teste*. [NCB's note]

cannot communicate with crowds? Did they have to dress him each evening and push him into a world that lacks understanding as much as irony? Wasn't he too rare to be a civil servant of glory?

. . . Certainly he was more in his element at Mallarmé's "Tuesdays."⁶² But to connect the belt at both ends, perhaps you must either cut yourself in two or make it break into pieces.

Among so many sides of him, I return most willingly to that of a visit to Samoreau, where we climbed the large, solid, mossy stone staircase of his master's house.⁶³ Here again is the small bedroom, a sort of house-boat berth made of cane, from where Mallarmé watched the Seine and his arrangements of ideas flow, where he stopped only the most authentic, the most difficult for himself.

As we left, we were offered the small climbing roses on the railing, all full of the summer's ferment.

At the cemetery upriver, Valéry took off his hat to commune even more directly with this mind.

While swimming in the river near Samoie—Valéry is a good swimmer—in "this river of perfume" (the perfume of tall poplars along the banks?) "full of memories" and reflecting the "three emerald eyelashes: reeds,"⁶⁴ Paul Valéry discovered a fourth reed there, where he carved himself a song and a name. Did he want to unleash such a hurricane? Obviously not. He lets the current carry him. The reed bends but does not break.⁶⁵

14. *Legends and Anecdotes, Translators and Detractors*

The great men who are fashionable—and whom another style may find very petty—are all the more sought after because a momentary pause seems to have taken possession of their intelligence so that everyone can grasp it.

The time of magnesium photographs is not a happy time for writing.

With a certain comfort I think of other writers who are less set in their glory and who defend themselves from the plaster mask as best they can.

André Gide acknowledged to me one day that he was translated in Japan, but that as yet he had hardly appeared in English.¹ I looked for the causes, and I found them, if not in his translators, at least in his Protestant origins. This element is too much of our own invention.

We have had enough of three centuries of repression and are at the point of encouraging ourselves to go to the other extreme. Although excess is not proper to our nature, we run the risk of practicing it very badly.

Is there a happy medium between the hedonist and the puritan?

It is one of the errors of our quarter-century that everyone believes himself called to live and exerts himself to do so.

The consumption of alcohol and the brisk sale of drugs demonstrate how few are naturally good at living. In organisms made for abstinence, this craving for excess, which no inner impulse justifies, deranges them wantonly and without pleasure. It would be better if we considered its possibilities and created for ourselves experiences suited to us. What is more fascinating than that joy in abstinence which has indulged in the minor sin of hesitating? Gide reproaches himself wrongly for this because nothing suited him so well. And Pierre-Quint rightly points out that Gide's puberty occurred a little late, when he reached the age of indiscretion, which did not occur until the age of fifty.²

Let us approve, then, not the Gide of Corydon,³ but the Gide of old who trembled at the danger he might encounter in deciding to meet Lord Alfred Douglas.⁴ (A meeting that represented no great personal danger because Lord Alfred, having lost most of his illusions, had acquired an almost exclusive taste for maidens.)

Could Gide allow himself the complication of such a meeting? He asked himself that question with that hesitation jovial and rich in perspectives that is appropriate to certain of Henry James's heroes. The case of the liberated puritan is characterized by André Gide, which finally made it welcome here at home. Slightly more than any other French writer, he seems to have undulated toward Anglo-Saxonism; didn't he translate Blake's *Heaven and Hell*?⁵ But he misunderstood Fielding to the point of reproducing only his faults. The essence of *Tom Jones* is too rudimentary, too much a man's book, not to escape him. One must not play with the strengths of nature when one has practiced only its weaknesses. And when one has practiced resistances that have cost us nothing, rather than the opposite. (I shouldn't like *Tom Jones* either, but I keep out of its way.) We all have the gaps of our good qualities. We understand the art of another country in our own fashion. And this fashion of interpre-

tation is even valuable. There is nothing left to add to something that is already too well understood.

I have seen Ford Madox Ford redden in anger at the heresies expressed to him on the subject of Landor, I believe, by Valery Larbaud (another mind close to the English mind, whose translation of Samuel Butler, Ford Madox Ford could not criticize).⁶

For shouldn't one be bilingual to understand all those nuances, and to go forth to the true conquest of another country? The manner in which French writers have thrown themselves into the translation of the untranslatable Keats has proven to me, yet again, how eager they are to make such a conquest.⁷

And in France aren't there scholars like that professor from Rennes who made so very thorough a study of Philip Sidney that English students use it? But this fact takes nothing away from the charms of error.

The learned and eloquent Esther Murphy (Mrs. John Evelyn Strachey)⁸—from whom I have this information—felt that Jaloux, in his *Figures étrangères* (Foreign Figures), wrongly treats the terrible and shrewd Jane Austen as a "simple young girl."⁹ And it is only from my own reading of these *Figures étrangères* that I understood that this term applies to Jane Austen's depiction of a world given to minutiae and apparently heartless. Whereas Emily Brontë, that other girl, whose whiteness contains the entire spectrum, gives us, in her marvelous *Wuthering Heights*, the phosphorescent madness of exceptional beings.

Jaloux, who is never caught in an error, recognizes and pays homage to this difference. The most penetrating critic for his compatriots and the most intuitive for ours, he perceives foreign literatures perhaps better than anyone, and does so without knowing their language. He has that Hero worship which Carlyle advocated, without submitting to it, adoration without reciprocity.¹⁰ Hero worship has died with heroes, and if someone bows down today, it is to pick up something.

Jaloux guards his spare time to cultivate beauty in all its forms and manifestations, knowing how much it finds itself abandoned.

Doesn't Stendhal advise that one should never tell a beautiful

woman that she is beautiful, because she must be tired of hearing it said to her?¹¹ But, as this reasoning is within everyone's reach, silence falls around the greatest beauties. Silence and a bit of the false abandon of envy. There should be a great deal of this detachment, which Jaloux has already described in his *Boudoir de Proserpine* (Proserpina's Boudoir), in order to admit this visible aristocracy and to serve it well.¹² For the common people like to recognize only what they can possess; consequently, only the average, the average which reassures, is always most desired.

Morand, another Anglo-maniac¹³—a snob to the point of bragging that he had shat in the Thames like the students at Oxford—has also frequented Englishmen and American women a great deal, but he has perhaps frequented them irreverently, with the slips of that American, a collector of pornographic sketches, who, wishing to buy from Lady W—the collection that she prepared to sell off in order to leave her descendants an untainted library, paused when he came to a Rops:¹⁴

“What's this?” the collector asked her. And she, not to intimidate him, replied:

“Oh! a rather unknown Belgian.”

“All right, will you throw this sketch into the bargain? That way, we'll get better acquainted with this, how do you say it? . . . this Rops?”

How many things are a matter of presentation?

There was an old peasant woman from Norfolk whom someone wanted to win over to Christianity with descriptions of Christ's sufferings. Skeptical, she asked:

“And how long ago was all this?”

“Two thousand years.”

“Two thousand years? Then,” she rejoined charitably, “we can hope that it isn't true!”

Nothing varies more, from one epoch to another or from one country to another, than sentiment and wit.

Everyone cried over *Clarissa Harlowe*,¹⁵ which is ridiculous today; and who still finds the caricatures of the Restoration humorous? Perhaps they weren't even humorous in their own day?

Fashions in sentiment change, as do those in wit, but Rabelais is ever-green, and I find it hard to believe that *Wuthering Heights* will ever become dated. The masterpiece holds up, because it is good.

English humor and French wit are so very divergent that it is difficult to make them come together.

Humor ebbs; without doubt its bite is due to the Puritan constraint, which has multiplied its subjects of amusement to the detriment of a liberty that it doesn't know how to exploit. Consequently, without revolt, with a murmur, a half-word and a half-smile, humor, that superior being, contained in every Anglo-Saxon, liberates him, while French wit attacks. Freed for all time, free in its play, its stroke is rarely a unifying trait, but rather a stroke that invigorates polite society by lashing whatever cannot match it!

Reconciliations—these victories of the mind between peoples—are all the more desirable as we will never have too many opportunities to laugh or to admire. And we have a great debt to acknowledge toward writers of the quality of the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, Francis de Miomandre, Valery Larbaud, Rouveyre, Jean Cassou, Gide, etc.,¹⁶ who, having a personal work to guide to a successful conclusion, in between times translate works that expand the literary horizon.

Thanks to pen-clubs and to people of letters, the League of Nations finds its agreement successful at least on this point.¹⁷

Presenting something or someone accurately and without damaging his charm is perhaps what is most difficult in our human commerce.

The epidemic of novels based on a saint, an empress, a poet, a musician, a philosopher—even a politician—while showing us

how they resemble the author and the run of beings in general, they leave us too ignorant about how they differ.

How, in fact, can we resemble our demi-gods, if not by making arrangements so that our demi-gods may resemble us? Without doubt, the author hopes through this debased marriage to lose in mediocrity what he had made his heroes lose in grandeur. I insist: We need, rather, excellent translations, or a simple account of deeds (already sufficiently erroneous), a happy return to those memoirs which, while written honestly in the first person, could occasionally keep their distance—even while helping us to bridge it.

Those who love pure water go to the sources and draw comfort there—honor to the diviners! And too bad for us if we are not terribly thirsty and content ourselves with just any mixture.

Pilgrimages are based on an equally adulterated quest. And I shall recount with pleasure what happened to a wit eager for details about Nietzsche who went to Sils-Maria to consult his landlord,¹⁸ who informed the man with the best faith in the world:

“H’m, Nietzsche, let’s see, Nietzsche? Ah, yes, Frederic? Well, he was my kind of man.”

In a conversation on this subject with O. V. de Milosz,¹⁹ I said: “To understand a Shakespeare, a Goethe, a Descartes, a Leonardo da Vinci, a person must equal him.” “Surpass him,” corrected my friend Milosz wisely.

But let’s return to the festivities of the mind among an elite of equals, and let’s restore to my little Temple to Friendship one of its most sacred missions.

Part Two

15. *An Academy of Women*¹: Foreword

If, in the second part of this book, *An Academy of Women*, I sketch too summarily, along with some well-known Parisian ladies, certain *Foreign Figures* living in France,² it is because, out of courtesy to them, I would not like to push them further forward or invite them to be seated before a possibly inattentive audience, but would only like to arouse attention to them as they pass. If these evocations, and the extracts that I give from their works, predispose the reader, for him will I produce portraits and a more detailed study.

This explanation is perhaps an excuse with which I mask a certain laziness.

To complete, to conclude, to satisfy are in fact less laws of my nature than to imply, to suggest, to sketch. As for the unpardonable negligence that seems to result from it, and for which I shall be reproached—and however paradoxical it may seem—even there I proceed and wish to proceed only out of laziness: idleness having always served me better than diligence, I put myself under its aegis, and offer both ripe and green fruit that has fallen from the tree of idleness—which is also the tree of knowledge.

In introducing here some of the women who strike me as representative of contemporary and cosmopolitan literature, I have retained from masculine virtue only that wholly academic custom which requires that a person be introduced before intro-

ducing in his turn. I therefore offer at the outset these two accounts concerning me.

I do not know, I will doubtless never know, by what absence of mind I cause to be portrayed here this amiable, flawlessly graceful danger: Natalie Clifford Barney.

Nine years ago, I crossed her off my list wisely, neatly, as was my duty, since here I express the formative art, the invigorating accent of the heart and we are not exactly in short supply of professors of moral debilitation.

And when her name set itself before me, when the demon of letters whispered to me: Why, this foreigner has the most severe and the most murderous trait, that of the great French moralists, immoralists, and she does you the honor of writing in your tongue; simple respect for her country would require that you describe her! I replied to myself awkwardly, I always reply: So be it; but for a woman, literature ought to remain something holier, more tutelary than for a man.

—Nevertheless, tonight, we celebrate Natalie. . . . Indeed, I do not understand what I am saying. But, never mind! Mustn't one know how to let go of one's faith? A completely inflexible line would be brittle.

Therefore, I look for excuses, since she represents exactly what I most fear: total sentimental anarchy, whereas I want to restore the law of the heart.

In celebrating her, I give myself leave, I set aside my sacred whims. A momentary weakness perhaps; cowardice, possibly; eclecticism, never. I abandon my military objectives (as my enemies would say) and by war I mean holy war; I no longer seek to "cohere" the heart, nor the conscience of man, that great example of incoherence. I stop a moment, I de-center myself, and I follow her into her scatterings.³ I therefore let the great Oblivion and Mme Shudder rage in her.

I leave aside what is inorganic, subversive, disorganizing, I leave the female caterpillar—and what a golden caterpillar!—to insert her health-killing grace into my Paris which is already only too female. It will defend itself well. And if I filtered culture for it, especially imported culture, if some day we were unable to give up hygiene in order to dive into the full restlessness of living, we would not be thoroughly clean.

What subjugated me, what "got to" me, as they say today, about this princess of dissolution, is not her insolence—Stendhal had experienced that,⁴ nor the La Rochefoucauldian blacking of character⁵ (the black in

painting is a trick)—it is the reptilian spirit, to be sure, but it is especially the air of distinction, the nobility of bearing when not poisonous.

With this secret code, Natalie, you link, quite despite yourself, everything you touch. Thus you remain inclined to outbursts and to scorn as well, completely fraternal, I must add, for your best preys. And you envelop men and women in such a perfect sentimental disdain that one sees only too well that you expect from them a perturbed attitude. Poor dear grand stylist, how cold you make me!

What an orgy of finesse and meditation, how many royal graces, how many pearls of wisdom, cast into the art of petrifying life!

With a sensitivity that is more voluptuous than sensual, more artistic than natural, you are there, over love, in the role of hard-to-please prince, because you look too much—you tower over trouble and you don't fall into it, beautiful chemist of the heart, who watches over your mixtures instead of melting in them, and doesn't dare try physics. Your prey is always pitiful compared to you, which I do not accept as artistic behavior. And then, are you so sure of it? Who knows what the quarries say in their private diaries? Dear censor of the half-fever, or of the quarter-fever, let me sting you, even you, a little bit, you who uses, and so well, so many nettles on all backs!

You have dreamed so much about the perfection of love and of its Golcondas,⁶ that you have not been moved by the charming commonplaces of lovers. Their insufficiency has not touched you, has not compelled you to supply the needs of those you consider wanting. But if you did not know how to be softened by shortcomings, who could have given you that smile, Natalie? And if there is a smile, why that cold stare? And why do you put tenderness on bread and water? I have discerned her crime of art, her feminine crime: Natalie is not tender! And there perhaps is her major and special writer's sign. Natalie Clifford Barney invented grace without love. You live in that halo of ardor where nothing weighs you down, but one must consent to weightiness in order to live. Your art is thus too fine, too pretty, too artistic for me, but it is one of consummate intelligence.

Too elegant angel of art and fever, how forcefully you do without force!

And what a miracle of balance you are, you who flees your roots, you who uproots yourself from the divine trunk, from the human trunk, you who searches for no shoulder to cry on, who remains judge and contem-

patrix of the good tempest when you do not judge it sufficiently uprooting, you who are so harshly amused at love's sorrow, think, Natalie, that you lack pity for the beautiful shivering girls when you respect only fire.

But where, dear anarchist, did you acquire that straightness of so-well-controlled line, that discipline of word, and above all, the divine nonchalance which makes you so easy to read, when you write such *mots* as: "The human race, a race I deplore." "The lady, an expurgated woman."⁷ Why these practical jokes on our despoiled classes?

Now, for the men! "All these penguins, who know how to wear only evening dress. Dispatch them, if not to the fire, at least to the cold."⁸ As if all the treasures of the Male, of the adult, did not beat as well under the shirt-front of evening dress! It is very feminine, but scarcely female! The barb is not wicked here, it is homicidal, it executes without moderation, it kills without discretion. It drives us to despair of man, in order to seduce. When I taunt our men, it is because I place hope in them. I refuse to imitate your American coquetry, Natalie, you who are so elegant, who exports France with so much seduction. You who are so thoroughbred, why would you fall in with the mania that gloomy intellectuals have of hating society people?

But, in you, the barb superbly lacks love, as I have told you, and given our age of twinging sentimentality and from a literary perspective, that's a virtue. In aristocratic dryness I recognize the disenchanting verve of grandmothers with ear trumpets, the verve which distressed me when I observed it in our mothers, I who am infected with humanity. And in that, you will have the people of letters with you.

I am grateful to you, spiritually, for laying down this weight of squealing humanity, just as I am grateful to you, Natalie, variable breeze, for again picking up this wretched humanity, in your rhymed mercies for the great Masculine.

You have notes of genius, you have them in sheaves: "This catastrophe, being a woman." "Genius, this excrescence." "Reason, this sophism." "The heart is off the beat."⁹

And there is so much grace in nasty remarks, such as: "Are appearances in such dire peril, since we're always trying to save them?" And this portrait of woman: "She had recovered from many things, which did not hinder her from relapsing."¹⁰

Do we see her enough, this disappointed one, who hides to devour the man she defames? How much wit—some of it ours—you return

to us there! O feminine dandy, how clear is your insight, how harsh it is!

How good at pleasing us, dear disintegrator, is the evil that you do us!

Fairy of destruction, who saps my moonstruck confidence in the human, why do you leave us, maleficent Natalie, with a taste of pleasure that proves you right over nature?

Have you perhaps come to say that, freed from life, in full health through a preference for art, one rides straight toward the spirit, and that life, brave and heavy life, is not inevitably the atmosphere of art?

But we will not believe you, dear Sphinx, because you highlight not faith, but doubt. Nevertheless, we will be grateful to you for leaving us the charm of human insufficiency. And I thank you for your nonchalance which lightens us and unburdens our day, and finds a way to keep us from feeling the pain of this despair: not to have been able to make for man a climate in which to unfold his finest "self."*

No, Natalie doesn't bring anything "new" because that is not the kind of life that she advises. And the new exists only in the direction of life. She brings a visage amused with dying; she brings a form bewitched by shipwreck.

AUREL¹²

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Miss Barney. There is a name that provokes looks. A Free-Masonic smile in those who know her, a glimmer of avid curiosity in those who do not.

To intimates, she is Natalie, nothing more. And once these three syllables are spoken, whether she is present or not, the comments begin.

The commentators have so much to say that they generally stop after the first words: Curious . . . Interesting . . . Extraordinary. . . . And the rest remains in the silence of reverie, because they have all understood each other without speaking.

It would take an entire book to say Natalie Barney, and such a book exists: Remy de Gourmont's *Les Lettres à l'amazone*.

Besides, I have let Mme Aurel talk about the Amazon and her thoughts. Her words were at once full of genius and shot through with obscurities, like everything that comes from her.

*In the sense that Léon Daudet gives it in *Hérédos*.¹¹ [NCB's note]

What I want to try to express, if wretched words, these traitors, allow me to approach it, is the atmosphere in which tonight's heroine—or convict—breathes, the atmosphere or, rather, the aura, because atmosphere comes from others, and the aura comes from oneself.

Natalie Barney, vaporous cloud behind which hides a solid rock, is so powerfully personal (however "exquisite" she may be, as they who have seen only the cloud say with a smirk), that her magnetic force also attracts only celebrities, while the quiet vigor with which she hates mediocrity repels from her entourage everything which, even from afar, borders on banality.

Thus you immediately see that her salon, as they say, constitutes the meeting place for all the eccentrics of Paris. However, one should not be mistaken about this. There are not only freaks at Miss Barney's Fridays. One does not go to her house as to a zoo, in order to see a collection of one-of-a-kind characters. One goes there to encounter values. Besides literature and art, you find at her home masters in the sciences, physicians, professors, a complete and unexpected world which corresponds to the gravity one also finds in the mind of the great flouter of conventions.

In the middle of this dense crowd, which is gathered around her charm, is Natalie.

Dressed in white, wrapped in some ermine cape, smiling and detached, she lets each one interpret her in his own fashion. That eye of hers, which sees everything, conceals this formidable acuity in the shadow and the glimmers of her fairy hair whose blondness is of so rare a hue that one might believe she is always covered in moonlight. Her eyes were created to gaze (not to be gazed at like those of most women); notice that their poetic blueness has some gleams of steel blades; don't let the charm of her smile conceal from you the sarcastic corner of her mouth; mistrust her dreadful left eyebrow when it raises during the seconds when irony passes. This extraordinary audacious woman, friend to all rebellions, can occasionally give you the impression of being intimidated. You will see her oddly blush, she who fears nothing and who dares everything, blush at too penetrating a word or at a look that divines too quickly. You will never hear her speechify. But, if you know how to lend your ear at the right time, you will detect words said in a low voice and as though to herself, trenchant words or words of a delicacy to be found only in this girl who is subtler than amber, or words with a depth on which to meditate to infinity.

Natalie Barney has given us an idea of her paradoxes in *Eparpillements* (Scatterings), a small book that only she could write.

But it is not, I repeat, about her work that I wish to talk—it is about her—her without her books.

Because she is a poet, philosopher, ironist, she is courageous, scornful, mysterious, subtle, grand, sophisticated, sardonic, aristocratic, she is all that in her private life before being thus in her books, and doubtless it is this that causes her to have so many devotees about her, not being one of those who, miserly, reserve their copy. She gives her friends rather more than she gives her readers, a generosity that must be bowed low to at such a money-grubbing time as ours.

You will be able to read her books. There is only one thing that you won't find there: Natalie's private grammar. I will give you just one example. Writing a couple she had known for twenty years, she bravely wrote down in her letter: "How are yous, Y-O-U-S?" because, she said, "I say *you* to both of them, then I have to add an *s*, don't I, as in all French plurals!"

This American who speaks our language with no accent, who writes it with a prodigious virtuosity, who is not wholly French, and who is no longer wholly American, which allows her to be a bit foreign everywhere, as she herself says, constantly has these amusing little exoticisms in her conversation.

She has other things which are less amusing! I am not unaware that she is listening to me, but she has heard it from me secondhand; and well I know that she will protest only by that laugh, low and a bit rusty, which is hers alone, and with which she underlines all disagreeable things said to her.

Irritating and irritated like almost all ladies from across the Atlantic, these autocrats whom the male of the United States obeys like a slave, Mlle Barney would, as the Arabs say, sometimes make your soul come out of your nose, when she has a mind to. Obstinate and obsessing, she can upbraid you for hours, without anyone understanding anything, for some very little thing that has displeased her; or else insist, likewise for hours, on forcing you to do the opposite of what has been decided. Oh! Natalie! I am sure that, in this salon alone, one could form an association, the association of the exasperated, who, during certain minutes of their lives, have intended to crush you in a mortar in order once and for all to silence your maddening recriminations, repeated in a faint voice for days on end.

I haven't finished! Accustomed to steamers and trains, a custom born of an infancy immediately dragged about in Europe,¹³ Natalie, wherever she may be, except at home, has but one idea, or rather but one instinct, to go away. To go away where? Who knows? She has made eighteen appointments in the same afternoon and feels that she will never acquit them. But after a quarter of an hour, whatever one may say to detain her, hypocritical, she begins to sneak toward the door, with a look of already being elsewhere, which would get her pounded once more, if anyone dared.

Let him who has not cursed her for such things throw the first stone at me!

But if I wanted to be perfectly frank, brutally frank, with her tonight, we would take too long.

Besides, all that is part of a whole, and she must be accepted as she is.

To sum up.

Natalie Barney, despite her faults, is that rare creature whom one does not encounter twice in a lifetime. After the little things I sketched about her, let's add moreover that she is a good sport, which explains the success she enjoys in that Paris which is the most refined, the most difficult—and the most international.

There she is: she is a most deluxe edition, limited to a single copy.

Now, the American Amazon, to end her equestrian travels, from among the five continents has chosen France, has chosen Paris.

Then, isn't it our duty to thank her for the beautiful tribute she pays our country in royally making us a present of her invaluable presence among us?

LUCIE DELARUE-MARDRUS¹⁴

16. *Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, President*¹

When her turn came, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus chose two young men to introduce her.

Jean Dars,² judicious youth with a surprising mastery, sets limits to her whom he wishes to define too well.

With a dramatic coldness he outlines her in sharp sentences, like a carnival idol surrounded by knives. While the youngest of them all, Philippe Crouzet,³ creates such an eddy that no image can stand out. . . . In incensing their goddess, these disciples succeed in concealing rather than revealing her. This jealous attention is perhaps instinctive with most men. Isn't that the reason a woman will preside at a celebration of women?

Seeing clearly is more flattering than seeing dimly. And after all, does one see quite clearly only when one needs eyeglasses?

Returned from her *Arabian Nights*, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus no longer had to maintain "discreet silence," but had to relate to innumerable tyrants, her readers, her marvelous stories, and her poems which comprise the intimate epic of her life. A life which, in adolescence, left Normandy for the desert, and which at present remains alone on the banks of the Seine, both in Paris and along the estuary. It has put rhythm into all the bends which carry it to the open sea, where it embarks like a "figurehead."⁴

I desired the fate of figureheads
Which leave port early and return late.

I am jealous of the return and the departure
And of the wet corals tied about their throats.

I will brave the bleak grays, the fiery blues
Of seas figurative and real,
Since, from the depths of danger, one returns more beautiful,
Returning with a face burning and fabled.

I shall be that one, followed by her ship,
Which raises aloft a brow christened with swells
And whose heart, until the moment of unquiet death,
Bravely traverses the voyage and life.⁵

As certain women shine only in intimacy, and can talk only to one ear at a time (I am one of these), others find their ease, and are at their best, in a crowded room.

Lucie Delarue-Mardrus belongs to the public, she is a born president, and a state of love almost always results from her tête-à-tête with the masses. A state of love in which she envelopes those she introduces with a divination that, among women of letters and for women of letters, she alone has possessed. With a sure tact she takes the pulse of the public, makes it feverish or calms it as she will. Her riding whip reaching to the last row, she senses a bad thought and interrupts it in order to change it. She is the medium and the tamer of a divergence of opinion, with a single inflection of her eyebrows:

Her delicate eyebrows which are
Two migratory birds moving freely on her forehead.⁶

Her beauty ranges far, and her intimate voice encloses the circle and whips it to a frenzy over the miracle of group excitement. Many novels have been written, too many of them about the tête-à-tête of body to body.

We still do not have the true-to-life novel, the *Dangerous Liaisons* of the public spirit.⁷ Following the *Psychologie des foules* (Psychology of People),⁸ Lucie Delarue-Mardrus owes it to us, because, as certain beings become blurred before a single

spectator, she knows how to remain unique and the quintessence of herself in front of her audience, however scattered it is, and she restores it to homogeneity.

Thus it is that perhaps the most representative poetess of France (who has already translated five poems by Edgar Poe in perfectly analogous verse)⁹ introduced the poetess Anna Wickham, whom she calls "the English Verlaine." Seized by an increasingly lively taste for her works, she has translated enough of these rough poems to collect them into a volume.¹⁰

This presentation has already been published in the *Grande Revue*.

But here is an unpublished sketch which I myself shall offer on Anna Wickham, after Lucie Delarue-Mardrus.

17. *English Bohemian Life and Anna Wickham*¹

Her lungs filled with country air, Anna Wickham came to mingle with the bohemians of London.

She brings more health to it than she takes poison from it.

The pubs, these cafés across the Channel, have always attracted poets.

From the “Cheshire Cheese,” a restaurant that preserves a slightly ostentatious and obsolete prestige in Fleet Street in the middle of commercial London, and where Dr. Johnson sat down to table;² to the “Mermaid Tavern,” where John Keats, drunk with despair and deep in his cups, took refuge against the double incomprehension of his family and his beloved,³ the artists fall silent together in these nightclubs in the foggy city.

Squeezed together like sailors at the mercy of their marine exile, and warmed by alcohol, they pitch on board their island, toward reefs . . . or masterpieces.

Not very sociable, out of timidity or misanthropy, they replace *esprit* with the spirits of wine, and drunkenness gives them the illusion of camaraderie.

The Villons and the Verlaines drank as a supplement, out of drunkenness superimposed on their natural good humor; the Swinburnes, the Condors, and the contemporaries of their sort

drank out of vital necessity;⁴ the French, the better to socialize; the English, the better to tolerate one another.

For the Frenchman, exuberant, from day to day possesses a discipline of art that contrasts with his excesses; the Frenchman is prudent, above all in his excesses, while the Englishman, in order to dare to surpass himself, to escape his bearing, to be an original, must out of propriety make people believe he is drunk, or mad, because in England the sober man has no right to speak; only the fanatics and the artists are not suspect when they express themselves.

Even the maenads at times simulate frenzy or passion.⁵ And if they snatch Orpheus' lyre, it is to use it. Art is often only a means, because love of preaching, the redress of a wrong, all sorts of reforms or demands brim over in English poetry from Shelley to Anna Wickham.

Anna Wickham is a semi-rebel, without sufficiently realizing that one loves what one tolerates. And the feminist leagues have hoisted certain of her verses on their banners. One of her verses has even been used by the Woman's Movement against the corset.⁶ Anna Wickham equally combats puritanism and other Anglican vices. But above all she is indignant toward matrimonial servitudes which shut in the bourgeois of the Croydon class,⁷ much more than orthodox people and women who fawn on priests.

Madame Bovary, had she been shipwrecked on this island, would have quickly renounced the vanity of the letter A, that scarlet letter of adultery (imported from England), whereas Hawthorne's heroine had to wear a placard displaying her shame, a sandwich woman for the terrible letter A!

Now that morals are less harsh, English women renounce the rigors of adultery, perhaps above all for want of applicants.

Haven't you noticed that in London, nothing is made for women, not even the men! Is that why women are becoming more and more masculine? Which permits me this sally: feminism cannot be a question of sex, since the French man is more female than the English women!

English women are by necessity militant; they gain their women's rights by sacrificing all the effects of femininity.

But we must be severe judges only of unproductive excesses. American women have been successful in defeating their men while remaining women. Save for the vote, French women get a matriarchy without children. English women have won the vote while becoming men.⁸ One is not always free to choose one's weapons.

Anna Wickham, the mother of four sons, has no daughters. Proud of the double attributes of wife and writer, she raises a family of males, for whom she is at once the pelican and the nightingale.⁹ Her poems show the glorious and arduous road on which the heroines of maternity alone dare to venture knowingly.

Her books, *The Man with a Hammer*, *The Little Old House*, and *The Contemplative Quarry*,¹⁰ are wells of truth to which less tested or less courageous women can cling to see, as in a daguerreotype, what might have awaited them—at the bottom!

Let us admire Anna Wickham for having climbed back out from these depths to disclose to us fragments of the universal secret.

Here are several examples of Anna Wickham's poetry:

God, thou great symmetry
 Who put a biting lust in me
 From whence my sorrows spring,
 For all the frittered days
 That I have spent in shapeless ways
 Give me one perfect thing.¹¹

Translation (into French) by Lucie Delarue-Mardrus

"*The Walk*"

We will walk through this wood,
 Rustling through dead leaves
 Crunching on fallen boughs,
 I will walk first, you must follow me.

We will go like beasts on a trail.
I am a lion, you my lioness.

I will take my own pace,
You must strain your curved brittle body to keep near me.
I do this because I see in your eyes that you will talk.
O wanton! You will stab me with subtleties.
I have no head for economics. What of that?
Your eyes, your hair, your teeth, your body,
You have used against me,
And now your mind is a sharp sword to stab me.

I want to walk in this wood,
To look at the sky, and note the tracery of leaves,
And listen for an early cuckoo.
But you will have me sit beside you,
Tell you that you are a beautiful woman,
And praise your wit.

I will not tell you that you are a beautiful woman,
You are my wife!
You know well that I feel every stir of you,
Can you not remember the touch of my hand on your arm?
I will say nothing at all about your wit,
But I will tell you this,
I think it very possible, that one of our sons,
Yours and mine, will be a man of genius.

O Jezebel! I see the triumph leap to your eyes.
You love your children less than yourself.
Are you the only parent of our son?
Did not my love make you mother?
Did I not know from the first moment that I saw you,
Your splendid suitability?

That act of mine means more to life
Than all your economics.
You shall not waste your time with books!

I will have other sons of you, and perhaps a girl.
I will tell you that your daughter is beautiful!

Now look at me!
This only matters to us.
You are a woman, I am a male.
I am male till the last atom of my tissue dies. —
Come now, walk!¹²

Translation (into French) by Mme Delarue-Mardrus

Possibly it is this same couple that appears in her celebrated poem:

I married a man of the Croydon class
When I was twenty-two.
And I vex him, and he bores me
Till we don't know what to do!¹³

a poem that Lucie Delarue-Mardrus has also published in the *Grande Revue*, following her article on this poetess who “excels at singing her worries.” Here is another typical fragment:

What is a wife?
Is it she who stays in a man's house for all her life?—
If wife were nothing more than that
Then she were equalled by a homing cat.

What is a wife? Shall it be said
She who by contract shares a bed?—
Go find a thousand wives complete
In girls that flaunt along the street!

Nor is it she, content with sequence from a cause,
Who, like a field increase by just laws,
And from a habit and with no end clear,
Brings forth a child for every wedded year.

Wives are the dreaming mothers come again
Who of blest fertile love bear souls of men!

Sometimes, with kindly silence, sometimes with stinging speech
Put a man's high attainment well within his reach.

There is a Virgin-Mother, shrined in Christianity,

For the constructive form-inducing principle for life
Is she unknown, unnamed God's wife. . . .¹⁴

And this "Fresh Start," excellently translated by Abel Doy-sié:¹⁵

O give me back my rigorous English Sunday
And my well-ordered house, with stockings washed on Monday.
Let the House-Lord, that kindly decorous fellow,
Leave happy for his Law at ten, with well-furled umbrella.
Let my young sons observe my strict house rules,
Imbibing Tory principles, at Tory schools.

Two years now I have sat beneath a curse
And in a fury poured out frenzied verse,
Such verse as held no beauty and no good
And was at best new curious vermin-food.

My dog is rabid, and my cat is lean,
And not a pot in all this place is clean.
The locks have fallen from my hingeless doors,
And holes are in my credit and my floors.

There is no solace for me, but in sooth
To have said baldly certain ugly truth.
Such scavenger's work was never yet a woman's,
My wardrobe's more a scarecrow's than a human's.

I'm off to the House-goddess for her gift.
"O give me Circumspection, Temperance, Thrift;
Take thou this lust of words, this fevered itching,
and give me faith in darning, joy of stitching!"

When this hot blood is cooled by kindly Time
Controlled and schooled, I'll come again to Rhyme.

Sure of my methods, morals and my gloves,
I'll write chaste sonnets of imagined Loves.

I was delighted to rhyme (in French) several of Anna Wickham's sallies:

I knew a chaste man, without pity,
I knew the veriest bawd in all this city.¹⁶

And also this:

Kinder the enemy who must malign us,
Than the smug friend who will define us.¹⁷

And this turnabout on a legend:

Sappho has no sons, poor Sappho,
Daughters are her only joy,
And yet it is fitting
That she drowns herself for a boy.

But, alas, I have no daughters.
Dead, Clais, my young flower.
But I drown myself so that
Your eyes shine for an hour.¹⁸

At times she rhymes two sentences, mysterious from being overly full of meaning, just like Blake. The Blake of *Heaven and Hell*, that Gide has rendered so well in French.¹⁹ But shall I likewise be able to pursue this maenad through her meanderings and comprehend this madness which is the Wisdom of darkness?

18. *Colette*¹

For many of us foreigners who wanted to see her up close (because women of letters scarcely know one another, except sometimes by name, I was prompted to make these mutual introductions), Colette gave several scenes from her *Vagabonde* at my home before acting them in the theatre.² Paul Poiret made his debut with prestige and drollery in the role of Brack, and Moreno, who enhances all roles, in that of the old lady friend.³ Colette, a vagabond indeed, a walking pedestal padded with a small triangle, has well-subdued plumpness and the color of a Dumas *père*, the mien of an owl caught in broad daylight.⁴ Colette, squat in order to be nearer aromatic plants and to fill her pockets with them, tramps about, ensconced on an athlete's legs. Nevertheless, at swimming these legs hardly carry her forward. "And then where would you expect me to go?" she grumbles among the monotony of the waves. Colette loves the salt sea and the open air, small dogs, the wings of the theatre, and one man at a time to ensure his slavery. Colette writes on blue paper, those squares of sky of her hard labor, and maltreats her feelings to relish better her very last gasp of tears.⁵ Colette is on the lookout like the cat "Nonoche," living the life of an animal caught in a perpetual ambush, and she gets so deeply hurt there!⁶ That so accomplished a creature has found the key to the open fields and should use it for apartments is so rare a

gift that she increases its value to that of herself. Hers is the discipline of a master, and her profession works her senses so well that they, too, become her domestic animals. Colette wears one additional glory each year, like her father's stripes,⁷ and on her sturdy Burgundian shoulders, a head where a wine of great vintage ferments, a great vintage that, saved from its dregs (Willy as the late Maugis would say),⁸ is starting to be tested at all the tables of the mind, and even Claudel (enamoured of the holy Table) acknowledges its bouquet.⁹

Colette loves what is, and contents herself with the earth—this good dish. If, healthy enough to do without bombast, she sometimes permits herself a flight of fancy, she is skimming the ground like the rooster of the moors that never perches higher than its nest.

Colette will teach her daughter Bel-Gazou to listen to none of the "dirty inventions with which one disguises the acts of love, which are so beautiful."¹⁰

Colette, on a level with nature and above men, in *Naissance du jour* (Morning Glory), her masterpiece, finally restored to herself, matches and surpasses herself.¹¹

And I remember from her *Voyage égoïste* (Journey for Myself) this remedy against heat: "On each hand place the cold belly of a small frog."¹²

19. *Rachilde*¹

Rachilde, so discreet looking when you first meet her, beneath her small cap decorated with strawberry flowers, has, behind her veil which is the color of distances (veil from rendez-vous long since forgotten),² mermaid's eyes shielded by two rows of steely eyelashes, which prevent humanity from entering too far into the realm of their folly.

Rachilde, hale enough to have spanned the epoque of black magic à la Huysmans—and that *fin de siècle* of the “unnatural”—finds them once more perched at the fore of this new century.³

Rachilde, who slashes a crowd with her sarcasm, is gentle toward bats and white mice, looks after them, and describes them with a maternal sense that she must hide from her apparent family. Her real family is a world underground and underwater from which she emerges, before suffocating, to scream at the top of her voice her rage against humans. It is not because the human being stands on his hind legs that it is as good as the other animals. Man inspires in her neither confidence nor tenderness, even less so woman, whom she designates “man's inferior brother.” Rachilde is the terror of gatherings because, among so many talkers, she alone dares to say what she feels. She drinks only water and cannot bear to love anyone. I hail in her a

strength that does not delude itself and which, taking all goals for targets, misses none of them.

Here is how Rachilde does not want to be celebrated:

Thank you, dear friend, for your idea for a reading of my works, but I say: "Thank you, no." I have always sold my wares (Montmartre or Montparnasse style!) in the street,⁴ and I have never wanted to sell them . . . or display them in the salons . . . and when I go to your home, it's to see you, to listen to you, and to embrace you.

But, so as not to leave Rachilde on this sally, here is one of her pages published in *Camoedia*:⁵

Minerva lives in a glass house. Her salons are set in a large garden in old Paris like so many crystal reliquaries. The presence nearby of lawns, of ivy-covered walls, of enormous trees, gives it a delightful aquarium half-light in summer. It is mysterious and cool. Behind the windows can be seen women undulating like so many spangled mermaids, whose tails, alas, must have been cut off by the implacable couturière, and the uniforms, splattered with red, emphasized with gold braids, take on the shimmer of Chinese fish, while the more somber attire makes them look like char.

Now and then a snow-white owl (*rara avis!*) hangs onto a stained glass window to make it all vibrant with strangled laughter, strange purring of a cat or vague cough, slight warning of the animal nature ironically dwelling behind the very mundane frolics.

20. *Aurel: Festival in Return*¹

Aurel—implacable Roman matron—presents her classic profile at public gatherings and seeks to please the masses, who do not understand anything about her mind, which is suited to an elite that does not understand anything about it either.

Yet her work is full of splendid finds that she hides, like her beauty, under trappings ugly enough to be the work of a tasteless petty seamstress.

What difficulty I had in introducing her outside her own setting, in introducing her well, despite the warrior she chose for this apotheosis,² who, wishing to crown her with superlatives, smothered her with them! It is not enough to adore; it is too easy to give way to those vague yearnings that are generally dedicated to God. The superlative is almost always carelessness. The superlative is moreover something uncreated, without form or color, a worthless nakedness hidden under artificial flowers. What a lack of observation there is in bombast!

Only the shrewd Lucie Delarue-Mardrus comes to the aid of Aurel and restores her to her likeness with skillful remarks on the talent of this sister in Letters.³

Aurel, whom I value, I am ashamed (out of an esteem that is obliged to smile) to introduce you that way. As a matter of fact, Aurel, “Natalie is not tender.”⁴ Tenderness, that parasite of the

heart, invades it entirely; and if not uprooted, perverts its standard. Kindness, too, when it eludes logic, is likewise another form of hoarding.

Aurel is a snob; she loves kindness, the weak of mind. A snob in reverse, she wastes her energy on the most arid ground, instead of acquiring a meditated contempt for her charitable impulses, like the Countess of Sottocasa who was taught to be “intelligent and good” and who admitted to me that her intelligence had been useful to her only to judge the stupidities of her goodness.⁵

Aurel, what is this horde that prevents us from approaching you? Don’t you think that it prohibits you from true encounters? Frequenting only one’s equals is less of a laziness than allowing oneself to be surrounded by just anyone.

Aurel, my spite is worth all their kindnesses.

Am I not able to repeat to you, as though coming from me, what you wrote me in 1910—and it’s even the best thing I could tell you:

I heed you long after I have read you. The sound of your audacity persists. . . . You have said things that fit my thought that I am disheartened for not having said! . . . Your thoughts are exaggerated, they are barbaric, they are the wrong thing to read if one is looking for reassurance. They hurt, they are alive, they insult, they scorn without anger, I perceive in them the black side of the soul, the side which is not afraid to offend. I perceive in them a unique intractable creature whom I prefer to your loving creature.

There was Dolent, that delicate near-love of every woman.⁶

There was Rodin, who, at the end of his life, no longer distinguished between women. Having created countless of them, that Titan certainly deserved rest from them within the eternal feminine.⁷

Aurel acknowledged and knew these two masters well. Why, since their reign, has she seemed cut off, has she no longer found the right person?

Aurel once tried to convince me that, if it is to man that I speak, if it is to him that I wish to speak, then it is he whom I should love. Does she recall those controversies in *Phalange*: “true or false paradises?”⁸ And will we ever know which were our true and which our false paradises?

21. *Mina Loy*¹

Let us celebrate the so diversely excellent works of Elisabeth de Gramont and of the English poetess recognized chiefly in America (the country to which she owes both the success and the tragedy of her life): Mina Loy.

The contrast between these two writers is well chosen to enhance the personality of each.

For her own celebration the first arrived late with her court of satellites. One of them had forgotten the opening speech that was to have introduced her.

Mina Loy, with a trainer such as boxers have, exercised and hardened in the solitude of my second floor. This ethereal being, forevermore withdrawn from humanity because of her own evolution, because of shocks she has undergone, needed to get back in touch, if only during the five minutes required to explain to us her detachment and her almost hermetic work.

Here is her "Apology of Genius," which I translated (into French) for the occasion:²

Ostracized as we are with God—
The watchers of the civilized wastes
reverse their signals on our track

Lepers of the moon
all magically diseases

we come among you
innocent
of our luminous sores

unknowing
how perturbing lights
our spirit
on the passion of Man
until you turn on us your smooth fools' faces
like buttocks bared in aboriginal mockeries

We are the sacerdotal clowns
who feed upon the wind and stars
and pulverous pastures of poverty

Our wills are formed
by curious disciplines
beyond your laws

You may give birth to us
or marry us
the chances of your flesh
are not our destiny —

The cuirass of the sour
still shines —
And we are unaware
if you confuse
such brief
corrosion with possession
In the raw caverns of the Increate
we forge the dusk of Chaos
to that imperious jewelry of the Universe

—The Beautiful —

While to your eyes
A delicate crop

of criminal mystic immortelles
stands to the censor's scythe.

Mina Loy

Following these verses taken from this *Lunar Baedeker*, a little book that should suffice to establish her among us, she herself read, and in English, an unpublished poem that she had just completed: "The Widow's Jazz," in which, above the black orchestras with their brass instruments, and the drunken dancers, this cry for an instant rends these veils:

"Husband, why have you cuckold [*sic*] me with death?"³

And all this was spoken in a dream-like voice, with the air of a somnambulist whom life will no longer succeed in rousing.⁴ She feared that she would be upset by such an excursion from her habitual solitude. But who could make such a poet depart from her solitude? Hasn't she already evolved out of this world of appearances: "She walks as though the angels were already nibbling at her heels."⁵ But, meanwhile, she wears among us a blind stare that seems to have gazed upon the Gorgon—a look as if thunderstruck with indifference.⁶ Her beauty has withdrawn into itself. She offers us this "apology of genius," and an entire prismatic poetry which plays with this world fixed in its destiny, from which, thanks to some perception of a fourth dimension, she escapes.⁷

22. *Elisabeth de Gramont*¹

After excursions with this lunar guide, we were delighted to find ourselves in front of an abstract materiality: Tea—that perfume that one drinks, that connecting hyphen²—brought us back gently to the *Good Things of France*.³

Their author, by dint of epicurianism and without clamoring against poetry, is such a poet in this book—well served at table in season—that her quintessence has escaped lesser poets.

The *Caille* (Quail) is a complete novel,⁴ and the *Nefle* (Medlar), this “sorbet of autumn,” would force Francis Jammes back to his knees, that shepherd outside the flock who has become a priest outside orders, who, lacking a chair at his writing desk, had to kneel down to sketch a dedication as beautiful as a prayer to our duchesse (and isn’t it necessary to have known the good things of this world to make an offering that might be worthy of a god!).

Mme de Gramont’s book on *Proust and Montesquiou* points out what the former owes the latter.⁵ It re-places these two characters, with a still-healthy originality, in an attitude of reciprocal dependence: Robert the peacock with an arrogance that affirms itself so as not to doubt itself; Proust so conscious of him that he dares to silence him in order to exude a servile politeness which deceives no one, not even Montesquiou. Because Montes-

quiou may have believed he was playing a role that Proust had written.⁶

The work entitled *Samuel Bernard et son temps* (Samuel Bernard and His Age) shows us one of our own great ladies, who can efface herself in the pursuit of learning.⁷ And the *Mémoires* that she is publishing at present (alas! without a sufficiently major financier) will be, thanks to this quality, a uniquely authentic document on all the spheres composing our social disorder.⁸

Placed at the intersection of many issues, she disguises her arrogance just enough to surprise the leaning of each. She conveys it without the least ill will and without envy—and why should she have any, having nothing to envy in anyone? Her communications are so exact that they alone are perhaps likely to last. Her eyes, lashed with antennae behind the small panes of her lorgnette, observe the changing group that she administers with a sure ease and, almost without seeming to, with the precision of an extreme politeness. In confidence this group gives itself over to her without her giving herself over to it.

Often untidy in her person, she is one in whose presence each one owes it to himself to look good; each takes advantage of the opportunity to take a look at himself in a neighboring mirror (a juxtaposition that the duchesse has taken care to give him) and this mirror turns out to be a trap⁹ where, sure enough, he gets caught. Because, before presenting himself to her under a chosen guise, in seeing him look at his reflection, she pins him under glass with a look that keeps him permanently in place.

Without deference and without meanness, her writings, like her presence, diffuse a genuine cheerfulness. She wins us over with the quality of the warmth and health she communicates. She makes herself hard to please and imposes a fidelity for which there is no need, because excellence is a secret tyranny that rightly exercises itself only over the privileged.

She was no doubt taught never to talk about herself, and this good piece of educational advice goes well with her slightly reserved, half Anglo-Saxon nature.

She is perhaps the only woman who, in writing, never writes about herself. One cannot imagine her writing like so many others: "Oh my eyes! Oh my hips!" She can be grasped only by stealth, so much does she show only an aspiring sensitivity, suitable for recording everything, but which does not reveal itself. She writes, not by profession, not out of set policy, but because others and their passing show amuse her. This egoism of courtly breeding supports and governs her work and her home. If all other privileged people shared so delightfully of their blessings, they would remove all pretext for revolutions. Certain heads are held high, not out of insolence or frivolity, but the better to discern the tract where our equals and our opposites struggle. Their tiara encircles the head, and its stones are all eyes, a sign of feminine majesties who owe it to themselves to be vigilant.

Mme de Gramont is connected too easily with the eighteenth century, but her true intellectual kinship dates back instead to the sixteenth century, for doesn't she have the raciness of a Rabelais, of a Montaigne, of an Henri IV?¹⁰ Her desires are wholesome simply because they *are*. I have seen her perspire with enthusiasm before a painting, an *object d'art*, perhaps even a forgery!; skin her knees plucking some fruit she coveted so that she could give it away; order her river yacht going at full speed stopped to have a cow milked in order to have fresh milk for her tea; forget to pursue an enemy in order to hear the finale of a concert; in short, to be worthy in every circumstance of nature that is the talisman of true *savoir-faire*.

Here is one of her little-known poems:

*Finistère*¹¹

Between the low sky and the narrow earth, we throw the four disks of motion.

The aspects of the landscape are pulled in the wake of a mother-of-pearl profile, motionless metal, necessary fixed point, whence the wheel of glances starts out.

There is more sky than earth.

The humble soil, crushed on three sides by tempests, clutches to herself her bare heaths.

When the ocean tries to cut too deeply into her, the granite rocks heave up and stop the furious swellings of the wave.

Near a deep, blue gash in the shore, men, to make the end of migrations, have cut the peninsula's heart into blocks, a stone flock that does not move.¹²

But over this sacred landscape the pines shed their capillary shadows.

The earth's last edges, gnawed by the winds, are enveloped in a strong softness.

The aromatic air creates a release.

With the kick of his heel, the swimmer can spurn Europe.

23. *Djuna Barnes*¹

To open the meeting dedicated to American women, all of whom, incidentally, swallowed a Bible in coming into the world, Doctor J.-C. Mardrus read a chapter he had just translated, on the creation of Eve.² According to his text, Eve was not created from only one of Adam's ribs but from his entire side. He also read another chapter on Naomi and Ruth, likewise with relevance for American women who between them support each other as much as these two Biblical women.

Ford Madox Ford founded the *Transatlantic Review* in France and often made the voyage to lecture over there on the mind here.³ Each time he returned he brought back a full cargo of unknown authors whom he introduced in his review. As it is to him that I owed my acquaintance, not only with that rare being Nancy Cunard⁴ and other poetesses, English as well as American, but with one of the young ladies of letters whose work we will sample shortly, I had asked him to say a few words about her. Perhaps he said them, but in a voice so muffled no one heard them. However, the keen audience had a presentiment that something rare was going to take place through the eloquent manner with which Ford Madox Ford was able to blush—which is better than a formal testimonial: The awkward age of the English lasts a lifetime!

Djuna Barnes, upright, unblemished, unpolished, grew pale

in her corner beneath this insult to her honor. If anyone could have made her founder before she arrived "on the far-off shores," it was herself.

I never introduced an author more gauche and more incapable of helping her own cause.

Her first book, *A Book*, contains sketches of characters illustrating her short stories and some short poems that bite straight to the heart.

From "Aller et Retour," a story published in the *Transatlantic Review*, I have extracted and translated (into French) this fragment of a meeting between a mother and her daughter:⁵

"You are very thin."

"I'm growing."

"I grew, but like a pigeon. Well, one generation can't be exactly like another. You have your father's red hair. That," she said abruptly, "was a queer, mad fellow, that Herr Von Bartmann. I never could see what we were doing with each other. As for you, . . . I'll have to see what he has made for you."

The house was furnished heavily, antiques, plush flowers, a plush Bible, tobacco.

In the evening Richter watched her mother, still in hat and spotted veil, playing on the sprawling lanky grand, high up in the terrace window. It was a waltz. Mme Bartmann played fast, with effervescence, the sparkle of her jewelled fingers were bubbles running over the keys.

In the dark of the garden, Richter listened to Schubert streaming down the light from the open casement. The child was cold now, and she shivered in the squirrel coat that touched the chill of her knees.

Still swiftly, with a finale somewhat in the Grand Opera manner, Mme Bartmann closed the piano, stood a moment on the balcony, inhaling the air, fingering the coarse links of her chain, the insects darting vertically across her vision.

Presently she came out, and sat down on a stone bench, breathing warmth.

Richter stood a few steps away and did not approach or speak. Mme Bartmann began, though she could not see the child without turning:

"You have been here always, Richter?"

"Yes," the child answered.

"In this park, in this house, with Herr Bartmann, the tutors, the dogs?"

"Yes."

"Do you speak German?"

"A little."

"Let me hear you."

"Müde bin Ich, geh' zu Ruh."

"And French?"

"O nuit désastreuse! O nuit effroyable!"

"Russian?"

The child did not answer.

"Ah!" said Mme Bartmann. Then, "Have you been to Nice often?"

"Oh yes, often."

"What did you see there?"

"Everything."

Mme Bartmann laughed. She leaned forward, her elbow on her knee, her face in her palm. The earrings in her ears shook, and the drone of the insects was clear and soft. Pain lay fallow in her.

"Once," she said, "I was a child like you, fatter, better health, but, nevertheless, like you. I loved nice things, but," she added, "a different kind, I imagine. Things that were positive. I liked to go out in the evening, not because it was soft and voluptuous, but to frighten myself, because I'd known it such a little while, and after me it would exist so long. But that—" she interrupted herself, "is beside the point. Tell me how you feel."

The child moved in the shadows. "I can't."

Mme Bartmann laughed again, shortly. "Life," she said, "is filthy, terrible. There is everything in it, murder, pain, beauty, disease, death. Do you know all this?"

The child answered, "Yes."

"How do you know it?"

The child answered again, "I don't know."

"You see," Mme Bartmann went on, "you know nothing. You must know everything, and then begin. You must have either a great understanding, or you must accomplish a fall. Horses hurry you away from danger, trains bring you back to the scene of your corruption. Pictures give the heart a mortal pang because they hung over a man you loved and murdered in his bed.⁶ Flowers stab the memory because a child was buried in them. Music incites the world to repetition. The cross-

roads are where lovers vow, and taverns are for thieves; contemplation leads to prejudice and beds are fields where babies fight a losing battle. Do you know all this?"

There was no answer from the dark.

"Man is rotten from the start," Mme Bartmann continued. "Rotten with virtue and with vice. He is strangled with the two and made nothing, and God is the light the mortal insect kindled, to turn to, and to die by. That is very wise, but it must not be misunderstood. I do not want you to put your nose up at any whore in any street; pray and wallow and cease, but without prejudice. A murderer has less prejudice than a saint. Sometimes it is better to be a saint. Do not be vain about your indifference, should you be possessed of indifference; and don't," she said, "misconceive the value of your voluptuousness, it is only seasoning to the whole horror. I wish," and she did not finish. Quietly she took out her pocket handkerchief, and very noiselessly, dried her eyes.

"What?" the child asked from the darkness, and Mme Bartmann shuddered.

"Are you thinking?" she said.

"No," the child answered.

"Then think," Mme Bartmann said loudly, turning to the child for the first time, "Think everything. Good, bad, indifferent. Everything, and do everything, everything. Try to know what you are before you die, and," she said putting her head back, swallowing with shut eyes, "come back to me a good woman."

What is not perceived in this abridgement is the extraordinary capacity of the author to capture social circles which she had every reason not to know. She penetrates like a clairvoyant in a trance in the story "The Passion" (published in the *Criterion*).⁷

And she brings back to life, as if through her and her transparency, an entire civilization in which she has not participated.

But the artist's intuition is a mystery that no one has sufficiently tried to elucidate. It is without doubt a being endowed with several souls at its disposal, but which, in its dealings with the outside world, can show only one. The one that Djuna Barnes puts on has a frankness and humor that pass through Cervantes and go directly back to Rabelais. A curious combina-

tion in a woman about thirty years old. She has a physical type that is also very much her own: a nose as pointed as an Ever-sharp pencil; a mouth irresistible to laughter, and auburn hair which she stuffs under a hat "à la Manet," one of whose most successful sketches she seems to be. One notices that her large, bony hands have driven horses, and no one describes them better than she—and Degas.⁸ She is tall and slender, and her clothes break at a right angle on her sturdy legs.

But let's go back to her brain through these three curious fragments which I have, as best I can, rendered into French:

*Paradise*⁹

This night I've been one hour in Paradise;
There found a feather from the Cock that Crew
There heard the echo of the Kiss that Slew,
And in the dark, about past agonies
Hummed little flies.

*Finis*¹⁰

For you, for me? Why then the striking hour,
The wind among the curtains, and the tread
Of some late gardener pulling at the flower
They'll lay between our hearts when we are dead?

*Fragment of a Portrait*¹¹

A thin Greek nose and near the face
A polished braid.
A profile like a dagger lain
Between the hair.

Her thoughts never go all the way to Thought. They are fragments of sensation, broken mirrors of *joie de vivre* on which one cuts oneself.

But do not believe you have grasped her in that either, because she escapes from sentiment in order to ridicule it in her book *Ryder* which is, I believe, a family portrait—where never has the family been so put to the test.¹² Few women have

written with such detachment. And Djuna Barnes claims that she has nonetheless a mid-Victorian heart.

She is capable of great friendships and limits them to two or three beings whom she sees constantly, and with whom she even forgets to fear the rest of the universe.

This friendship of which Anglo-Saxon women make so great an issue is much more interdependent than camaraderie, and on “*la carte du Tendre*” occupies the place between camaraderie and love, this type of friendship being a species of love without pleasure.¹³

24. *Gertrude Stein*¹

—Mina Loy, also a friend of Djuna Barnes, introduced the woman who, they say, perhaps most influenced the young writers of our day:

Gertrude Stein, here present, in her tiger cap and her sandals which are scarcely visible below a long khaki skirt. A brow that she uncovers and touches constantly and a gaze that makes others' drop, toward a brooch from a reassuring era.

Gertrude Stein has lived in France long enough to have known the mother of Marie Laurencin, and the beginnings of Picasso, whom she encouraged;² and the young Apollinaire belonged to her circle of friends; and didn't Max Jacob say: "In prehistoric times I knew the admirable Gertrude Stein." It is rather astonishing to see this living pagoda strolling through the streets of the Latin Quarter, or perched on the Ford that she kept after her war service, like a Hindu goddess accompanied by one of the faithful who carries veils and pendants.³ At their home in the rue de Fleurus they offer tea and cakes, and eccentric little artists and future writers undiscoverable elsewhere, with a hospitality, a grace, and an organization that at once evokes the Orient, Maryland, and California.⁴

Mina Loy, more sure of her than of herself, explained her admiration for this innovator in a French that I can only leave as is:

Twenty years ago someone remarked to me: "That the day was quite dead when a genius could arise to be unrecognized."

They said we are cultivated to such a degree and so blasé in the face of every surprise that hereafter no one could baffle the critics.

But it is the peculiar lot of our culture that every virgin thought will burst upon this culture like a raving madwoman. And to this lot criticism has yielded once again in the case of Gertrude Stein.

For nearly twenty years Gertrude Stein has built her work, of which all that culture allowed to be published were several hazings in humorous reviews.

She continued to build her work, I do not say courageously, as it is the custom to say in such a case—because it is the basest contempt to suppose that sentient beings need courage in the presence of thoughtless persons—but with equanimity. And her little smile of contentment regarding these hazings has given me infinite pleasure.

She knew very well how every activity of her brain, even deformed by ridicule, would fall among the literature of her day like a chemical precipitate.

I give you Gertrude Stein, just as I have specified her elsewhere, as the Madame Curie of language.⁵ Because in her deep research she has crushed thousands of tons of matter to extract the radium of the word.

She has prodigiously broken to bits the raw material of style, and in a radical manner has swept the literary circus clear for future performances. This has given unheard-of courage to innumerable young people.

In America, many authors have achieved fame by following one of the numerous ways half-opened by Stein's experiments. But Gertrude herself has been systematically unrecognized in her own country, where, for years, people have clamored for truly American innovators.

Very well, there she is, the all-American innovator! and over there when they had extracted from her unpublished manuscripts all sorts of riches, and new forms, she was recognized, this prophetess from across the Atlantic, by good old conservative England.

Gertrude Stein is not a writer in any sense of the word as it is understood at present.

She does not use words to introduce a subject, but uses a fluid topic on which to let her words float.

I can show you the consistency of her art by observing that never

will you hear anyone say "I have read such and such a book by Gertrude Stein." One says, "I have read *some* Gertrude Stein."

I doubt that any of her writings have appeared in French, especially as it is the essence of this work to be untranslatable even in its own language, because this comical innovator has reduced the English language to a foreign language, even for Anglo-Saxons.

And it is only her fame, today world-wide, due to severe trials to which she has subjected contemporary intelligence, which would prevent any public from reproaching me for what I have just said as a senseless paradox.

Perhaps much of the opposition unleashed against Gertrude Stein came from the fear of people who professed to be bewildered.

If ever I permitted myself to understand all of that, there would come one beautiful morning when I would no longer know how to order my breakfast.

I have translated (into French) the following two passages from a work of nearly two thousand pages. And the subject merits them! *The Making of Americans*:⁶ now translate the title: fabrication, does it correspond to making? Yes, perhaps for the Frankenstein monster that D. H. Lawrence, the most sensitive English poet, feared to encounter while visiting the United States:

I am afraid to come
And answer the first machine-cut question from
the lips of your iron men.⁷

I

In this slow history of the progress of an American family, the human series finally reaches its summit in the singular being:⁸

To a bourgeois mind that has within it a little of the fervor for diversity, there can be nothing more attractive than a strain of singularity that yet keeps well within the limits of conventional respectability, a singularity that is, so to speak, well dressed and well set up.

This is the nearest approach the middle class young woman can ever hope to make to the indifference and distinction of the really noble.

When singularity goes further and so gets to be always stronger, there comes to be in it too much real danger for any middle class young woman to follow it farther.

Then comes the danger of being mixed by it so that no one just seeing you can know it, and they will take you for the lowest, those who are simply poor or because they have no other way to do it.

Surely no young person with any kind of middle class tradition will ever do so, will ever put themselves in the way of such danger, of getting so that no one can tell by just looking that they are not like them who by their nature are always in an ordinary undistinguished degradation. No! such kind of a danger can never have to a young one of any middle class tradition any kind of an attraction.

Now singularity, that is neither crazy, sporty, faddish, or a fashion, or low class with distinction, such a singularity, I say, we have not made enough of yet so that any other one can really know it, it is as yet an unknown product with us.

It takes time to make queer people, and to have others who can know it, time and a certainty of place and means.

Custom, passion, and a feel for mother earth are needed to breed vital singularity in any man, and alas, how poor we are in all these three.

Brother Singulars, we are misplaced in a generation that knows not Joseph. We flee before the disapproval of our cousins, the courageous condescension of our friends who gallantly sometimes agree to walk the streets with us, from all them who never any way can understand why such ways and not the others are so dear to us, we fly to the kindly comfort of an older world accustomed to take all manner of strange forms into its bosom

II

Here is another passage from this same book, the longest book since the Bible and James Joyce's *Ulysses*:⁹

It's a great question this question of washing. One can never find any one who can be satisfied with anybody else's washing.

I knew a man once who never as far as any one could see ever did any washing, and yet he described another with contempt, why he is a dirty hog sir, he never does any washing.

The French tell me it's the Italians who never do any washing, the French and the Italians both find the Spanish a little short in their washing, the English find all the world lax in this business of washing, and the East finds all the West a pig, which never is clean with just the little cold water washing. And so it goes.

Yes, it has been said that even a flea has other little fleas to bite him, and so it is with this washing, everybody can find some one to condemn for his lack of washing. Even the man who, when he wants to take a little hut in the country to live in, and they said to him, but there is no water to have there, and he said, what does that matter, in this country one can always have wine for his drinking, he too has others who for him don't think enough about their washing; and then there is the man who takes the bathtub out of his house because he don't [*sic*] believe in promiscuous bathing; and there is the plumber who says, yes I have always got to be fixing bathtubs for other people to get clean in, and I, I haven't got time enough to wash my hands even; . . .

All this washing business is certainly most peculiar.

Surely it is true that even little fleas have always littler ones to bite them.

That Gertrude Stein should have won to her cause those who profess to be modern—Jean Cocteau on the lookout for every novelty,¹⁰ also Edith Sitwell and even the students at Oxford where she lectured on her method of writing and was enthusiastically received—is perhaps less astonishing than the fact that she prompted a (French) translation by the cautious pen of the widow of Professor Langlois.¹¹

A little water-pipe. I have it here.
Of course you mean a water-pipe.
We watched and saw how they fixed it.
This was a very strange matter.
A little visiting and so speedily done.
Indeed water-pipe
We said water was not lost.
It isn't.
Not nearly so much wind.
In conclusion I ask for water.
Are you not content with the rain.

I am very content with it.
 Plenty. Why do the dogs like water.
 It is very irregular.
 You mean to say the little one.
 Yes Yes.
 A great deal of it did you say.
 A little water-pipe. Call me. Water pipe a plan.
 A little piece of it.
 We shall see to it.
 I am very sorry that we are troubled.
 No trouble.
 There is never any danger.
 Oh yes I understand that.
 Naturally you do and now will you go in.
 Into the house.
 But we leave the door open.
 Yes of course.

A book of *Selections from The Making of Americans* has just been published by Éditions de la Montagne, very well translated (into French), it seems to me, by Georges Hugnet.¹² In his preface he boasts thus: "I do not know any English, but I translated letter by letter and comma by comma." In his "Bibliographic Essay" he also praises these sentences because they follow, not a grammatical logic, but a logic of the mind. Can these two logics, then, be incompatible? Her new translator must have known better than I what Gertrude Stein wanted.

These sentences are, if you wish, resonant sheets of water, waves following one another and each time encroaching a little further on the solidity of the land.

But all these explanations, convictions, initiations, opinions, and these admiring whispers repeating themselves without end remind me a bit of the tale by Andersen: "The Emperor's New Clothes."¹³

. . . "God forgive me," he thought, after opening his eyes wide, "I don't see anything at all."

But like a wise man, he did not show his astonishment.

In all situations that must remain a State secret. "Am I unfit for the high office that I occupy? Stop! I certainly will never tell a living soul that I do not see any material there."

"Now then, Your Excellency, what do you think?"

"But it is superb, magnificent, even more beautiful than you promised me, etc."

I have refrained from translating the repetitions that characterize the style of Gertrude Stein, because which of us would want to see a school centered on these circular sentences? On these reiterations that resemble physical exercise perhaps leading toward some future strength? For those who love the ellipse, these whirlings, this monotonous exercise inflicted on the language, are unbearable. For it does not achieve the development of a fugue or a resonant dénouement, never attains the frenzy that concludes the dervish dances; and one waits in vain for Miss Stein, dizzy from these circumlocutions, abruptly to stop spinning on them. But perhaps she has the blindfolded eyes of Samson.¹⁴ And does she work unwittingly?

Gertrude Stein, who knows how to write like everyone else, seems to have imposed on herself, with these repetitions of sentences, the infirmity of the stutterer, without doubt in order to escape this first inferiority.

I mistrust the unusual word that seems to give itself away so well in falling apart. Originality certainly exists less in research than in the subconscious. Temporary victim of a prejudice, Miss Stein will manage to emerge from her circles that imperfectly hem in a free intelligence.

I want to believe, with Mina Loy, that Gertrude Stein's brain is an innovation mill and that she will yet escape the gears and put to press a completely different style, because she has not come very far, aside from one innovation.

James Joyce (who, it appears, owes much to her) in his epic novel *Ulysses*, where so many poems are destroyed with a burst of sacred windows, and trampled upon, describes, to

make it progress and come to light—a very crude light—the twenty-four-hour adventure of his hero Blum [*sic*], this Irish Jew.¹⁵

Valery Larbaud presided over the masterful translation—masterful it had to be—of this masterful *Ulysses*.¹⁶

Having given without faltering the measure of this fabled contemporary, Joyce in his “Work in Progress”—published in the review *transition*—tries his hand at literary games that display his prodigious memory and his knowledge of all cliché-ridden languages.¹⁷ Is it to get revenge for having had to teach these set languages in the Berlitz school that he puts them in his kaleido-

scopic brain, makes them spin there, welds them together, cuts them off, and serves us a linguistic internationale that is not without flavor—to the one who can follow it. But it seems to me only a scholarly puzzle, an anarchism to which he was entitled after the failure of the sober *Portrait of A Young Man as An Artist [sic]*,¹⁸ and of that play of his that we carried to the “Oeuvre,” as many as ten years ago, isn’t it, Lugué-Poë? and which has not yet seen the light of day, not even the false light of the footlights.¹⁹

After the dissociation of Gourmont’s *Ideas*, Rimbaud’s sonnet, “Vowels,” then Marinetti’s “words in their freedom,” and the subconscious dictations of the surrealists,²⁰ Joyce, on the ledgers of several languages, resembles the one-man band, who, alone and simultaneously, uses formidable dexterity to revolutionize sound and to set off these sonorities which, being unexpected, strike us as odious. He not only puts the words back in fusion, as Gertrude Stein does with *Tender Buttons* (I dare not translate this title into French, fearing a very Gallic interpretation),²¹ but the words themselves unite outside of their admitted forms to cohabit with other words drawn out of their regular uses by the necessities of change, and which adapt themselves curiously to the polyglot sense toward which we move—a beginning of a United States of Europe?—or a return to the Tower of Babel? This is more than a revolution, it is an organic change, a disinte-

gration, a distortion, then a reformation of words among themselves to reach a synthesis of language, the result of several neighboring civilizations and their idioms, composite to answer to our status as composite, this modern mixture, this broth of culture to which we belong.

25. *Romaine Brooks: The Case of a Great Painter of the Human Face*¹

Romaine Brooks, for want of tolerable friends, has not had the enemies she deserves.

One of them, believing that he described her unkindly, made this remark which seems to be a most heartening description: "She is a foreigner everywhere."

And, in fact, Romaine Brooks belongs to no time, to no country, to no milieu, to no school, to no tradition; nor is she in revolt against these institutions, but, rather, like Walt Whitman, neither for them nor against them—she does not know what they are. She is the epitome, the "flowery summit" of a civilization in decline, whose character she was able to capture. Almost a subconscious psychologist, she puts on her canvases the best kept secrets of the distinctive personalities she paints. She operates on them, relieves them of existence, through a confession so strong and so delicate that they themselves are won over to it. Her radiant personality, with an apparent naïveté, reassures falsely. Under this good-natured appearance, she makes contact with the beings whom she permits to pass before her, the better to renounce them.

Not just anyone is painted by Romaine Brooks!

She paints as she lives, with the inspiration that has managed to restrain her and which she has expressed in her art.

Today, people talk a great deal about “modernism,” about “movement,” without sufficiently realizing that an acquired speed cannot be movement—movement, as has been proven, being born from a relativity that one can no longer be unaware of.²

Romaine Brooks grasps the movement of each person and fills the space that separates her from it through the most brilliant of communions.

Her two portraits of d’Annunzio, one the bitter rake and the poet, the other the soaring warrior, give a maximum of what two beings can add to each other, the quality of each increasing the value of the other.³

It is this quality that Romaine Brooks provides, which prompted one of these society models well known for her good looks to remark:

“You haven’t made me look very pretty!”

“I have made you look noble,” replied her friend Romaine.⁴

Her eye, developed to the point that it cannot tolerate bright colors, once caused her to eject from her studio another society woman, who had tactlessly arrived dressed in garish green.

It is for this same reason that Romaine Brooks’s palette fears the promiscuity of salons. Her discrimination does not tolerate certain environments.

She has within her no unkindness, no malice, but when her hypersensitivity makes others suffer, it is only her way of expressing her own suffering.

She makes up for that in being good, even as she drives people to despair and completely overwhelms a humanity from whom she expects nothing, except the productive peace which to her is worth its absence. However, her search “for new elements” on which to hang a routed sensitivity indicates to what degree she might have wished to enjoy them. And isn’t her

solitude a reproach to their absence rather than a too-voluntary escape into herself? It is because Romaine Brooks is too attentive and genuinely demanding that she so rarely finds anything outside her work to satisfy her interest in mankind.

She is of an integrity, of such a moral purity, that she throws into relief the blemishes of others.

Her self-portraits (one of which is on view at the *Jeu de Paume*) show a lavish desolation.⁵ She takes refuge in books, where the best of us is to be found. And as this taste for others is constantly repressed, thwarted, because it is too ardent, you don't know whether to envy her or pity her for not being able to satisfy it elsewhere. Let her be so dissatisfied at giving more pleasure than she gets!

Endowed with another means of expression, she uses her voice to interpret hymns and "performs the function of angels," precisely because her being has caused the timbre of her singing to evolve heavenward.

She occasionally comes back down here to chastise with her writings those who have seemed to want to let her down, or to judge her, a thing that she cannot endure. And is she not right, since judgment supposes equality? When someone whom with good reason she considers inferior reveals some despicable trait, she abandons her song and her paint brush to seize her pen, and she sends him a last judgment; but a slander merely confronted is only half-punished. May he, then, receive her reply and punishment through the bookstore, because her writings are bound to strike a whole species of individuals rather than waste themselves on only one person.⁶

Celebrated, at the peak of several fashions that she created and inaugurated in her home, she retired to let her imitators catch up with her, there where she no longer is!

She slowly but surely prepared her memoirs of a painter in which the portraits of groups and social classes that she has passed through are set by an inexorable fixative.⁷ Moreover, she is illustrating this work and will give those of us who are waiting another book of views without text: these sketches correspond to

the expulsion of our interior demons, to imaginary catastrophes, to baseless fears in which one seems to participate in the confused birth of dreams. And for these autobiographical memoirs I prophesy a success equal to that of these unique sketches. When painters meddle in writing . . . I was the first and the most demanding of her readers:

“Naught blinds us less than admiration, friend.”⁸

26. *Renée Vivien*¹

Salomon Reinach presided over this retrospective no doubt to prevent some rival from taking his place.² As a posthumous lover of the poetess—“who perhaps might not have approved of these compliments nor of his jealous cares,” as Anatole France remarked—he had a revelation to make to us: Renée Vivien had never loved anything except glory. He supported his thesis and convinced Professor Seignobos, proof in hand, not mentioning the contrary evidence, out of his hands and contained in a dozen other volumes. The convincing documents were there: “Vaincues” [*sic*], “Mes Victoires”, etc., no more were needed.³

A scholar’s heart is a dark well in which are buried many aborted feelings that rise to the surface as arguments. These concepts that he believes he is reaching by reasoning testify to instincts, awakened through the same mind that intended to condemn them to oblivion. And certainly, I have not resisted all faiths to believe in the infallibility of the human mind, however learned it be.

Berenson has well said of him that his almost ecclesiastical resistance to women leads to so obvious a susceptibility to them that he is more tried by their slightest movements than the most sentient rake. He hides his ardor as badly as he satisfies it through the peccadillo of kissing women’s hands. And isn’t it with a lover’s jealousy that he attempts to amass relics and

defend them with so much ferocity, until the moment when he is sure that he will no longer suffer from their exploitation, until the year "2000"?

Sir or Madame,

(Nothing in your letter enlightens me on this subject.)

I have, indeed, assembled some documents on Renée Vivien, but they are for the Bibliothèque Nationale and the year 2000. I have a horror of anything that can resemble a biography of Renée Vivien. We have her divine verses, that is enough; we have André Germain's book, it is already too much.⁴ The study of her style and of what people can call her philosophy of life is quite legitimate and requires neither indiscreet glances at her correspondence nor knowledge of her numerous wanderings. People already know more about her than about Racine,⁵ and if they must know more in the next century, it adds nothing to the beauty of her poetry.

Yours faithfully.

S. R.

And it is also to the year 2000 that he bequeaths the love letters that her female contemporaries will want to entrust to her secret museum. If I now felt able to write my own book about Renée Vivien, would he only lend me the notes and documents that he has collected on her?⁶ Certain letters that Renée Vivien wrote me and which I allowed Salomon Reinach to take were returned to me, but on their front engraved with a garland of violets he had written, in small letters it is true, but discernible, in the corner of each page, "copied."⁷ Nothing leaves the hands of science unscathed! And if I tease my friend Salomon a bit in public, he whom I love and esteem, it is in the hope of chastising him for such sacrileges and cruelties.

He protects in this manner a memory which in my opinion he ought less to defend than spread. Because if Renée Vivien loved glory so much, he runs the risk of serving her poorly by letting all this time intervene. . . . It is possible that some invading

oriental or other race will value her less than the enthusiasts whom he discourages. Certainly Renée Vivien sought glory (but because she despaired of love), as well as religion, in the doubt of surviving otherwise. Weak, she allowed herself to go to the assurances of the highest bidder, and to all those long-term “investments” from which she anticipated profits and bliss. But what matters is the quality of her writing, not what, seeming to inspire her, was only its pretext. Renée Vivien sought love and suffering, as the Christian woman who is unaware of herself; she had everything of a future believer, beginning with renunciation:

If the Lord bent over my death,
I would tell him: “O Christ, I do not know you.
Lord, your strict law was never mine.
And I lived just as a simple heathen.”⁸

Heathen, not at all. I see throughout her poems our former misunderstandings and the comprehension that a direct fervor gave me: the evolution of a mystic.

Doesn't life give certain beings a need for suffering? Aren't these souls incurably the souls of Christian women who seek in every emotion an excuse for their sorrow?

The cross seems to have covered the entire world with its large shadow. Happy are those who have escaped the heredity of this creed! Renée Vivien, even into her first love, felt its inevitable obsession creeping, undefined, unrecognizable, but already present.⁹ For, more than other men, poets seem to collect the influence of past centuries. They are, as it were, depositories, through a sensitivity more refined and fickle, of all that issues from races and that exalts or subjugates men. We are experiencing a drab epoch. Our cities, our houses, our clothes, our ambitions, and even our hearts are impregnated with it.

. . . Our spiritual ancestors, in offering us a heavenly life in compensation for the present one they taught us to scorn, have evidently destroyed in us the faculty of embellishing it. By promising an eternal heaven, they have likewise spoiled the simple joys of the moment. And it is thus that we come to think,

without anyone even dreaming of pointing out the morbidity of the thought, with this poetess who exclaims in complete joy and full youth:

But the vision of years tears me,
And, prophetically, I mourn your beauty!
Since this is the law lamentable and stupid,
You will one day wilt, ah! my Lily!
And the hideous shame of the wrinkle
Will mark your brow with this word: Formerly!¹⁰

We would have wanted just to forget this “law lamentable and stupid,” but since we have been reminded of it so beautifully, we can only admire this poet of decline, in whose works love of beauty, that intentional paganism, contrasts constantly with that unconscious sadism of enemies scornful of the flesh.

. . . More than any other woman, she was the priestess of death, and death was her last masterpiece, because this loving virgin died in harmony with herself, she was punctual for her appointment, and on an autumn night welcomed “her who knows how to give nights without morrow.”¹¹

This was not a suicide: those who love life kill themselves, those who love death let themselves die, they savor the past of each thing, they look for its shadow in each thing.

Paganism is no more than a remote name. Late, but in time, the Christian shadow reclaims its own when they are weakened by disillusion, remorse, and sickness. Their reason, even their pride, abdicate before this spiritual atavism which, at “the black hour,” gathers their poor souls, capsized and suffering, but still hoping, even from death, for some miraculous gift. And isn’t Christ there to welcome with all his pity these carnal people, returned from disappointing materialities? No one brought more mysticism to her sensuality, more sensuality to her mystic transports, than Renée Vivien. Born a Protestant (one is not converted to Protestantism, but from Protestantism), she became a Catholic, and the priest who had converted her childhood friend gave her “the consolation that the priest comes to give.”¹²

. . . But one must not say of Renée Vivien that she “converted”; all her life had instead been an evolution toward this final and undeniable hope. There is nothing mysterious or contradictory in the fact that almost all great sensualists finally come to the foot of a cross whose pressure and obsession they had already experienced. Natural enemy of abstraction, of stoicism, of pure reason, and of metaphysics (with Nietzsche, is it not better “to shiver from cold than to adore false idols”?),¹³ by an imperious innate necessity, the cross invites faith.

Disappointed in her earthly adorations, Renée Vivien, because of her two primordial tendencies, inevitably had to come to the religion that was the most capable of satisfying her being that was always eager for ceremonies and images, and her heart long since exhausted before the altar of carnal idols.

And I believe that it is thus that one more poet, worn out by suffering and fatigue, accepted, in view of a possible eternity, that last aspect of sensuality: Catholicism.

The soul searches for God, but like a lover who is too passionate, it takes a wrong turn and winces at every step that thwarts its expectation. It is thus, by dint of mistakes, that love becomes a sickness of the soul.

The love duet is an invention of opera; in real love, one only sings alone or one after the other.

If one is sad in passion, it is because the largest part of oneself is excluded from it.

St. Teresa and certain other great women lovers are to be found entirely in it. Passion is therefore the best use of themselves.¹⁴

Jesus Christ has seduced more women than Don Juan.

The white path of these other nuns testifying to their ignorance of all that which they renounce, the childishness of that to which they aspire . . .

O. V. de Milosz seems to me to be the only successful mystic I know;¹⁵ he searches for God, even through “Science, that sterile woman,” to overtake Einstein at the exit from his equa-

tions, with poems like his “Épître à Storge” (Letter to Storge), which had a presentiment of the system of relativity and of movement. In *Ars Magna* (Great Art), “Cantique de la connaissance” (“Canticle of Knowledge”), the poet of old is seen transforming himself into a prophet and his visions lighting up an entire metaphysical heaven. I grant credence to Milosz (I who am neither a metaphysician nor a mystic). Even where I am not able to follow him, the correctness and the depth of his spirit help me rejoin him.

And in these lines from *Nihumim*, he speaks thus of women:¹⁶

Forty years.

To learn to speak of woman without scorn. O love!

Forty years I have looked for you among women,

But it is not among women that I found you.

O woman! The compassion of stones seizes me!

Mother! mother, you no longer know, you do not yet know who you are.

You, white, lying on your back among the flowers! for so long

You have slept in the darkest, most silent part of the beautiful abandoned garden!

And here you are standing in this season of laughing ugliness,

In the midst of these sons who have lost their god and have not found nature.

O mother! mother! and this beautiful drooping shoulder of a carrier of fresh water.

And this hollow mien of a maidservant awakened early.

What wisdom and what knowledge, o woman, are in the palm of your hands!

Let me not be able to contemplate them without a dove flying off from them!

And your holy whiteness tames the swan!

When the husband dies, you will follow, you will die:

Not from the sorrow of the flesh, but from the

Deep joy of the spirit!

To speak to you and to be understood, o mother, I must once more become a child.

For, what can you understand about this world of change.

O beautiful, solemn, and pure pillar of the hearth!
Mother! the veiled sources of change are in a place dark and
forbidden

Whose name is Valley of separation. There
Worlds and hearts yearn for one another in vain.
And all that one touches is the distance and the duration
Of separation.

He who searches ineffectively finds nothing anywhere,
He who finds something here, bumps elsewhere against closed
doors.

For there is a country where the single being is alone
Facing himself.
There, he loves himself
And marries himself
And creates himself.
There, he glorifies himself.

And the place is named, by those who resemble you, place
Of joining,
Of eternal femininity and of
life.

27. *Retrospective of Marie Lenéru*¹

*By Magdeleine Marx Paz*²

Several days ago I received a letter from Natalie Barney, asking me to speak to you for five or six minutes today about Marie Lenéru. I put the letter down in front of me, and I felt dreadfully, cruelly embarrassed.

To talk about Marie Lenéru, I who do not know how to talk, and to talk about her for several minutes when volumes could be written about her! How could it be done? First, to evoke her faithfully—she who so strongly felt the profound identity which exists between the physical being and the inner being—who so pursued, in her words, those “electric encounters of the soul and the body, that miracle of the double star,”³ in order to evoke her faithfully, before all else one would have to recount her person

Naturally, she is before me, in noble outline, erect, extraordinarily elegant, thoroughbred, in a country dress unsuitable for anyone; I see her eyes, her admirable black eyes, soft, imperious, veiled, full of questions—the eyes of a daughter of sailors—I see her hand, “her Arab hand, shooting straight as an arrow, with a minimum of flesh,” as she herself said;⁴ the way she carried her head, like a Blessed Sacrament, the way she walked, restrained, almost prancing. . . .⁵

I see her in this salon, which she often attended—always with the same joy—then at home, in the boarding house where she lived, seated beside her mother whom she never left, lively, welcoming, playful,

curious and eager about everything. . . . And moving at my fingertips I even feel the alphabet I learned in order to talk with her. . . . Now I hear the hoarse and disjointed sound of her voice, which was little more than the embryo of a voice And I rediscover the astonishment I felt each time I saw her! Her very utterance was a last word! . . . When others' conversation is all drowned in unfortunate banalities, her presence is all sparkle, profound thoughts succinctly expressed.

Now also, beneath her fearless countenance, I catch sight of her hell, her almost thirty years spent in a solitude that she dubbed "a disintegration in the void,"⁶ those cries of distress that she shut up within herself, and her almost sensual aspiration toward the music, the noise and the sound of the human voice which she had heard in her infancy and which she refused to lose.

I also perceive beneath that occasionally slightly stiff manner, that almost religious bearing, beneath that scarcely lived life, the fierce instinct to live that filled her to the brim: "To have read all the books," she wrote, "smelled all the flowers, petted all the animals, lived in all the climates, associated with all the races, tasted all the joys and all the sorrows, known all the admirations and all the lucidities, and, in dying, to have no more to throw away than a peel sucked and twisted by a master hand. Amen!"⁷

. . . And also, in this creature in whom infirmity had opened wide the doors of a higher world only to imprison her there, for this soul who, at the age of seventeen, conceived of love as an "exceptional concordance of movement,"⁸ of pride as "a law of aesthetics,"⁹ as a woman, she also wanted her share!

"To seduce, to be seduced, there is the definition of life," she repeats in her *Journal*.¹⁰ And then, further on, "Glory does not embellish woman; and I do not wish to sacrifice her."¹¹ Even intelligence, which she understands only as a visible radiation: "Intelligence should be a physical beauty. It is mediocre if it does not go that far; its role is to eclipse everything. . . ."¹²

. . . Yes, but if I managed to reconstruct the person of Marie Lenéru, her gifts, her character, the aspect of her intelligence, there would still be her work. . . .

And how can I talk quickly about *Les Affranchis* (The Emancipated), about *Lutteurs* (The Wrestlers), about *La Maison sur le roc* (The House on the Rock), *Le Redoutable* (The Redoubtable One), *Mahdi* (The Mahdi), *Le Bonheur des autres* (The Happiness of Others), *La Triomphatrice*

(The Victress), *La Paix* (Peace), about her extraordinary *Journal*, which at once recalls those of Amiel and Marie Bashkirtseff, and even about her *Saint-Just*, which I do not like, and for which I reproach her, she who understood everything, for not knowing how to put herself at the true level of the Revolution in order to study her subject?¹³ How can I speak of the implacable stripping-away of language, language as beautiful as a blueprint, as strict and perfect as geometry, and inflexible in its simplicity: "Simpler, ever simpler," she would say. . . .¹⁴ How can I avoid talking about the influences that she underwent and about the people she influenced? . . . How can I show that around her rough, nervous, cutting dialogues, which leave in the air a sort of metallic vibration, she has created a world, a living world of creatures whose temples are struck by thought, hardened by intelligence, endowed with higher uneasiness; how can I make understandable the originality of the conflicts that make up her plays, what their sense is, their height; how can I show on what deep cultural foundations all her work rests, with what learning it is nourished, what its pulsations are and what its structure is; and how can I say, finally, that through her work she proved that there could exist a theatre of ideas, and that in dramaturgy there was a still unexplored zone into which she was the first to walk? . . . It is impossible, it is absolutely impossible. . . .

Very well, I have come before you to tell you that . . . no, absolutely no, I will not be able to talk to you about Marie Lenéru. There is her work. You are going to hear some passages from it. And that alone can bring her to life.

Magdeleine Marx

Magdeleine Marx Paz spoke thus about Marie Lenéru, almost in a low voice, as if for herself alone, in a confessional whisper. She who is so grandiloquent muted her eloquence, used none of her oratorical skills, seemed to shed her skin, to efface herself in favor of the pious evocation of her elder.

Bent over these traces of memory, her head—that head which many times captivated men of a unique stamp—tried to follow the course of this explorer of soundly adventurous ideas who was Marie Lenéru. The contrast between these two women is striking: Magdeleine Marx, free spirit, dutiful to "Clarté,"¹⁵ to ideas so broad that they embrace bolshevism and its organized disor-

der; and Marie Lenéru, that other self-made woman, but in whom traditions left discipline, and her infirmities the resource to mine thoroughly the riches of an inner life. Superwoman, from that cloistering in herself; seeress, thanks to her vision; hidden from the minor aspects of questions, yet avoiding none of the essential struggles of her time—as troubled a time as ever there was—she catches sight there of feasible utopias, utopia, according to her, being the reality of tomorrow. Evolutionary rather than revolutionary, prophetess, she studied economic questions, which had too little lyricism and sensationalism for those who wave the red flag. For, isn't it better to see clearly than to see red? Wise and shrewd sailor's daughter responsible for her frigate, and naturally deaf to pirates' voices (even if they were to have sirens' songs seduce her), expiating her attraction for Saint-Just through a preface by Barrès, she sails toward a harbor, like a good Frenchwoman, all sails taken in. And wasn't it to honor her better that Magdeleine Marx lowered the colors, checked the span of her masts, and "didn't make waves"?

And in the midst of the war, what an example of temperance and courage Marie Lenéru was to us!

At this time, women are first of all mothers, sisters, wives of soldiers. . . . Women do not return the blows, and however united they may be with those who fight, however passionately attached to the vital struggle that their country sustains, all the same, they are not the actor, nor only the victim, but the witness of the drama. . . . the witness who must survive and remember. . . .*

Because the day will finally come when one's duty will no longer be to accept and to remain silent, but to judge and to rebel . . .¹⁷

Why did my country have to ask that of me? And in front of the evasive response of men, their unbelievable passivity in the face of "war," their almost infantile submission to the scourge, their laziness of intellect, and their torpor of will, woman, who, for the first time, is consciously present at the event, will be able to judge that she has a role to play beside this timorous mate, whose unvarying argument will

*"The Witness," *The Book of France* 1915.¹⁶ [NCB's note]

be hopelessly this: "War is a periodic accident. It happens every fifty years."¹⁸

. . . She knows that today, through its disproportion, war exceeds all purposes, that it accomplishes none of the goals for which it is waged, except an ephemeral peace treaty, and nothing would be more hopeless than the gratuity of a cataclysm, if there were not this parrot sentence, with which one resigns oneself: "As long as there are men. . . ." Ah! it is hardly the question of a reform of human nature! Murder and pugilism, true, are natural, but not murder without pleasure. The truth is that a general mobilization is the summit of artificial life as imagined by man and civilization. To have dreamed, then achieved such a utopia is a miracle of human will, which ought to make us hereafter skeptical in the face of the impossibility of any other idle fancy.¹⁹

Today's deeds are yesterday's words.²⁰

. . . If public opinion has been candidly pacifist in Europe, the dangerous game of threats and intimidation would have been impossible in the salons of embassies and secretaries of State. One of the most intelligent and sensible opponents of the war, M Norman Angell, told us recently, "What makes the gun is the man behind it," and the thought that is behind the man and the gun.²¹

. . . From all her memories and all her mourning, from all the horrors to which woman forever remains the convulsed witness, she has the right to formulate, not a prayer, not even a wish, but a command to all those responsible, a command for which she will be able to raise heralds and executors, a command in which she will henceforth send her only reason for surviving: "Let it never happen again!"²²

Around these words I formed a group of women.²³ Marie Lenéru, seated on the steps of my Temple to Friendship, remained its tutelary genius, her gaze fixed beyond the women assembled under the cupola, facing one another, too often forgetting the goal of our gathering in order to linger over unimportant grievances. Proven feminists, such as Valentine Thompson [*sic*], endeavored, with a presidential forearm, to restore the order impossible to establish between those extremes: Sévérine and Jeanne Misme.²⁴ Our council of women, ready, under the pretext of peace, to devour one another, did not win even the victory of a Lysistrata.²⁵ Sailing on the wing of a mediating idea,

I found only food for my skepticism. And yet, how many women have ruled their country and made femininity triumph beyond the world and the war.*

It is those women who disappoint us who are wrong, not the great force that they represent. Woman, the center of the world's gravity, owes it to herself, with her accessory, man, to direct the children she produces. Virgin, mistress, and mother, from her may they receive life a second time.

* Let ignorance and its doubts be enlightened in *The General History of Feminism*, by Léon Abensour.²⁶ [NCB's note]

28. *P.P.C.*¹: *Leave-Taking*

So ends this account of these few representative women and these adventures of the mind that had as their setting these old gardens belonging to Racine,² this house, certain parts of which date back to the Directory, and this mysterious little Temple to Friendship surely built on the eve of the Revolution, an atmosphere of dilapidation which is indispensable to these "beyond the pale" who, like myself, return to their beginnings.

The radio, publicity's responsive nerve, asked me for a summary of these gatherings. My lack of curiosity will always be astonished by the curiosity of the outside world.

As has happened several times before, someone came to interview me about my salon.

Do I have a salon?

In any event, it is nothing official. No political party, no preconceived opinion reigns there. Nothing reigns there, and I even less.

In fact, detachment is the sole attitude of a mind that sees in each opinion only a semicolon, a momentary halt of the understanding.

In her salon, Mme X. asked the few friends whom we share:

"Who was there?" As everywhere, there are people who are drawn to, or accustomed to, or interested in getting together.

And among them I am, as someone has rightly said, the most unobtrusive of my guests.

And if it must be admitted, my true salon, my place of understanding, is the tête-à-tête: exposing the brain, operating on it for all the illnesses of custom, scalping it if necessary to see what is inside, feeling its contents, feeding on its genuine matter. Could I then be a vulture? Woman? No, amazon.

And one isn't an amazon without an appearance of cruelty. We aren't even displeased to be thought wicked, if this interpretation can save us from becoming so.

The amazon, who rightly loves only the arrow, finds herself especially cramped in the presence of these dense pages, with no room.

In leaning over multiple faces have we perhaps discovered only our own image? For, in correcting this book, we were astonished to see, having composed it, how much it composes us. However, for this large family of minds, for their slightly "flat" portraits, I have wanted to be only that touch-up varnish: adventure!

Avid idleness, which lacks any one defined goal, has a thousand of them. The person who does not go bankrupt, who does not capitulate, who goes free of honors, who maintains his single art of living, can offend or can be considered an untaxed luxury! I have nothing formal, reassuring, or fixed; it is possible that one day I will no longer even be found at my at-home day. —I will have burned my Temple to Friendship—a ritual gesture owed to missing friends—or I will have borne it away like a tabernacle toward the unknown, with the horizons as my smiling accomplices.

Notes

Dedication

(DED): NCB dedicated *Adventures de l'esprit* to Philippe Berthelot (1866–1934), diplomat and *eminence grise* of the French Foreign Office, of which he was Secretary-General, 1920–21, 1924–32. Despite his governmental responsibilities, he maintained a strong love for literature.

1. Forewarning

1. The quote is from Wilde's essay "The Critic as Artist" (1890).
2. Between 1751 and 1772, the Encyclopedists produced, under the editorship of Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean d'Alembert (1717–1783), a French translation of Chamber's *Cyclopaedia*. Their attacks on the Church and on despotic governments served the causes of the French Revolution, which began in 1789. The writings of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) were influential in providing an ideological framework for the Revolution.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was an Indian poet, dramatist, novelist, philosopher, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1913), the first Asian so honored. He recited his poetry at NCB's salon.

3. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), French poet and statesman. Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938), Italian author and nationalist.
4. The quotation is unidentified.

5. NCB's projected volume appeared as *Nouvelles Pensées de l'amazon* (New Thoughts of the Amazon) (Paris: Mercure de France, 1939).
6. The opening words from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116," with the substitution of the word *us* for *me*.
7. The opening line of an untitled sonnet by the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé.
8. The United States purchased the Louisiana Territory, including New Orleans, from France in 1803, for 80 million francs. "Honest Judge Miller" is unidentified.
9. Marquis de Lafayette, French soldier commissioned major general in America's Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, in 1824 made a triumphal tour of the United States at the invitation of Congress.
10. Joshua Barney (1759–1818), privateer, international naval officer, marine hero; according to Wickes, *Amazon*: 17, he was probably not related to NCB.
11. Count O'Leary's refrain was "doubly" disrespectful because it also applied to NCB, who was fond of quoting it. Barney first kissed the Queen on the cheek (not on the hand), and then kissed the jealous ladies-in-waiting.
12. Barney commanded the *General Washington*, formerly the *General Monk*.
13. The Monroe Doctrine, first promulgated in 1823, forbade further colonization in the American states by any European powers. Monroe was minister to France (1794–96) and a negotiator in France for the Louisiana Purchase.
14. During the French Revolution, the National Convention succeeded the Legislative Assembly (21 September 1792) and governed the country until 25 October 1795, when it was replaced by the Directory. Called to frame a new constitution, it first abolished the monarchy, condemning the king to death. It supported the Reign of Terror, only to overthrow it.

The Committee of Public Safety (1793–95) was composed of nine (later twelve) members who exercised dictatorial power; its leaders included Danton, Robespierre, St.-Just, Couthon, Carnot, and Collet d'Herbois. The President of the Convention at the time of Barney's visit was Citizen Bernard.

15. That is, in the month from 18 August to 21 September 1794. On 5 October 1793, the National Convention adopted a French Revolutionary calendar in place until 1 January 1806, when Napoleon restored the Gregorian calendar. The twelve months were named by the poet Fabre d'Églantine (1755–1794).
16. A line from a poem in *Nos secrètes amours* (Our Secret Loves) (Paris: Les Isles, 1951), a volume of love poems, most frankly sensual, which NCB had collected and published anonymously in 1951. Wickes, *Amazon*: 82–83, identifies the poetess as Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, sometime lover and long-time friend of NCB. Chalou, *Portrait*: 77, leaves the author unidentified; he quotes the line in question as part of a quatrain:

Like a stream of sweet water crossing the bitter sea,
 Our secret amours, tenderly entwined,
 Pass through this impious century, with its
 Rude thought, unable to place its soul in your flesh.

17. By treaties with Spain, France had secured Santo Domingo in 1795 and Louisiana in 1800. Napoleon planned to join these with the remnants of the Old French Empire—St. Domingue, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the lesser Indies. The failure of the St. Domingue expedition, the hostility of the United States toward French control of New Orleans, and the rising antagonism of Great Britain toward France prompted Napoleon suddenly to renounce his colonial dream and to decide to sell Louisiana to the United States.

Joshua Barney was sent to Santo Domingo with artillery forces and large amounts of munitions and stores.

18. During the War of 1812, the British defeated the Americans at Bladensburg, Maryland, on 24 August 1814. The same day, the British entered Washington, D.C., about five miles from Bladensburg, and burned the public buildings. Barney was wounded in the thigh by a musket ball that embedded itself in the bone and was never extracted. The sword was presented to him on 28 September 1814. He died and was buried in Pittsburgh.
19. On formal occasions, the forty members—the Immortals—of the Académie-française wear the *habit vert*, a uniform distinguished by green palm leaves embroidered on the coat and down the trousers, the *bicorne* (a two-pointed hat), and the sword.

20. Maurice Barrès (1862–1923), French novelist, essayist, politician.

2. *First Adventure: Oscar Wilde in the United States*

1. In 1882, Wilde crisscrossed America lecturing on art history and aesthetics. NCB was five years old when she met him. Late in life she recalled that she was running away from some boys who had pelted her with preserved cherries, which got stuck in her ribbons; see Philippe Jullian, “Fresh Remembrance of Oscar Wilde,” *Vogue* (1 November 1969): 231.
2. In 1895, when NCB was 17, Wilde was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment with hard labor for homosexual practices. He served most of his time at Reading Gaol.

When NCB was 25, she was engaged briefly to Lord Alfred Douglas (1870–1945), Wilde’s former lover; in her fifties, she had an affair with Dolly Wilde (1899–1941), who bore a striking resemblance to her uncle Oscar. In 1950, NCB organized a literary gathering to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Wilde’s death.

3. *Pierre Louÿs circa 1900: Literary Beginnings*

1. Pierre Louÿs (1870–1925), pseudonym of Pierre Louis, novelist and poet, who wrote under a number of pen names because of the supposed commonness of his surname. With André Gide, Henri de Régnier, and Paul Valéry, he founded the exclusive literary reviews *La Conque* (1891) and *Le Centaure* (1896). In 1894, *Chansons de Bilitis* (Songs of Bilitis) appeared, purportedly Louÿs’s translation from the Greek of erotic prose poems composed by a poetess contemporary with Sappho (fl. 7th century B.C.), but, in fact, his own highly successful literary hoax. When the deception was discovered, Louÿs was admired for his erudite Hellenism and his pure style in writing lascivious (and lesbian) love poems. Debussy and others set some of the “songs” to music. The great contemporary fame he enjoyed derived from his novel *Aphrodite* (1896), originally serialized as “L’esclavage” (“Bondage”) in the *Mercur de France* (1895–96). The story of courtesan life in ancient Alexandria combined licentiousness with scholarship and proved frequently attractive to illustrators. Louÿs was also the author of *Le Femme et le*

- pantin* (The Woman and the Puppet) (1898), *Les Aventures du roi Pausole* (The Adventures of King Pausole) (1900), and *Archipel* (Archipelago) (1906).
2. NCB was twenty years old when *Aphrodite* appeared in 1896, so scarcely a child when she read it at the family's summer home in Bar Harbor, Maine.
 3. In 1900, the Paris publisher Ollendorff issued NCB's *Quelques Portraits-Sonnets de femmes* (Some Portraits and Sonnets of Women). Most of the thirty-four poems, addressed to some two dozen women, are love poems, unquestionably lesbian in tone. Only two of those who inspired the verses are identified by name, the actress Sarah Bernhardt and Princess Troubetzkoy, an American who wrote under her maiden name, Amélie Rives. NCB's unpublished autobiographical novel, *Lettres à une Connue* (Letters to a Woman I Have Known), was an account of her love affair in 1899 with Liane de Pougy (1869–1950), one of the most famous and brilliant courtesans of *La Belle Époque*. Liane recreated their relationship in her novel *Idylle saphique* (Sapphic Idyll) (1901).
 4. According to Louÿs's dedication in *Songs of Bilitis*, "This little book of ancient love is respectfully dedicated to the young women of the future society."
 5. From the opening line of Baudelaire's poem "Lesbos," in the "Pièces Condamnées" ("Condemned Poems") section of *Les Fleurs du mal* (The Flowers of Evil). "Femmes damnées" ("Damned Women"), the title of two poems by Baudelaire, one in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the other in *Les Epaves* (The Wreckage). The poem in the latter group features the characters Delphine and Hippolyte. While Baudelaire included lesbians in his poetry, he did so to condemn them, as the titles of these two poems suggest; see Jay, *The Amazon and the Page*: 106.
 6. In "Femmes damnées" (*Les Epaves*), Delphine addresses her companion as "Hippolyte, cher cœur" and "Hippolyte, ô ma soeur" ("dear heart" and "oh my sister"), (lines 25, 35).
 7. From Baudelaire's poem "Lesbos" (lines 43–44). In the second quoted line, NCB wrote *de sombres* rather than the correct *aux sombres*.
 8. Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863), French poet and novelist. He also had an undistinguished army career, largely because he was tem-

peramentally unsuited for a life of action. He wrote some of his most famous poems while in the army, which he left in 1827. The lines quoted came from *La Colère de Samson* (The Anger of Samson) written in England in 1839 (lines 99–100).

9. From Vigny's poem *Eloa* (1824), *Chante Troisième* (Third Song), "Chute" ("Fall"), line 47. The poem concerns the purest of angels born from a tear Christ shed at the sight of Lazarus' body. Eloa is damned by a relentless Jehovah for descending from heaven when moved by human pity.
10. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), poet of the French Romantic movement. In his narrative poem *Jocelyn* (1835), the eponymous hero shelters the "boy" Laurence, who turns out to be a girl. Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), French poet, novelist, and journalist, in whose novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), the charming young squire Théodore is in fact the title character. Séraphitus-Séraphita (in *Séraphita*, 1840) is the hermaphroditic offspring of two angels who eventually rises to heaven, there to dwell permanently. NCB long admired this work. The plot of her privately printed novel *The One Who Is Legion* (1930), involves the resurrection of a suicide who appears as a sexually ambiguous hermaphrodite, A. D. The story is introduced by a poem acknowledging its debt to Balzac:

A double being needs no other mate—
So seraphita-seraphitus lives;
Self-wedded angel, armed in self-delight,
Hermaphrodite of heaven, looking down
On the defeat of our divided love.

11. From 1896 to 1902, Louÿs lived in an impressive apartment at 147, boulevard Malesherbes, near the Parc Monceau. In late June 1899, he married Louise de Heredia (1877–1930), youngest daughter of the Cuban-born poet José-Maria de Heredia (1842–1905). They were divorced in 1913.
12. Renée Vivien, pen name of Pauline Mary Tarn (1877–1909). Her first book of poems was *Etudes et préludes* (1901). One of NCB's great loves, she is the subject of a chapter in *Adventures*.
13. From John Keats's ode "On a Grecian Urn" (line 20). Louÿs inscribed these lines in Renée's copy of *Songs of Bilitis*, while his

- inscription in NCB's copy addressed her as a "young woman of the future society."
14. Jules Cambon (1845–1935), French diplomat. Charles Brun, a classical scholar who taught NCB Greek and French prosody. The novel was *Lettres à une Connue*.
 15. Presumably a reference to Renée Vivien's poems and to NCB's first book of verse, *Quelques Portraits-Sonnets de femmes* (Some Portraits and Sonnets of Women) (1900).
 16. The friend is Renée Vivien.
 17. Pierre Louÿs, "Poétique," *Mercure de France*, 115 (1 June 1916): 385–88, articulates the essence of his aesthetic doctrine in some sixty-five precepts, set forth in approximately one hundred lines of rhythmic, majestic prose.
 18. Claude Farrère, pseudonym of Frédéric Charles Bargone (1876–1957), naval officer, novelist, whose works often had exotic settings. He was elected to the Académie-française in 1935. In 1919, he married the actress Henriette Roggers, with whom Natalie had had a passionate affair a decade earlier.
 19. NCB's thirty-first birthday occurred on 31 October 1907.
 20. Paul Claudel (1868–1955), French poet, dramatist, diplomat. From 1893, he spent forty years on consular and diplomatic service in the United States, South America, and the Far East, as well as in Europe.
 21. A premonitory attack of ocular illness occurred in Naples in 1901. In the autumn of 1911, Louÿs suffered temporary blindness from which he recovered, although he had impaired vision thereafter; by 1917, he could read and write only by using a magnifying glass.
 22. *La Nouvelle Revue française*, a major monthly review of literature and the other arts (1909–43) and publishing house.
 23. The poem's Latin title translates "Reborn by Night." In mythology, Orpheus was the greatest singer and musician conceived by the Greeks. He used his talents to rescue his wife Eurydice from Hades, only to lose her as they neared the world of the living. *Orpheus* is feminine in Louÿs's poem.
 24. The second line paraphrases Keats's epitaph for himself: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." NCB quotes the inscription in English in *Adventures*.
 25. Louÿs admitted to smoking some sixty cigarettes daily for the last

- thirty-five years of his life. He suffered from respiratory problems and later from emphysema, which contributed to his early death. In 1899, he wrote “Une Volupté nouvelle” (“A New Delight”), in praise of tobacco.
26. Yvonne Sabini, the drug-taking wife of the Italian commercial attaché in Paris. Under her maiden name, Yvonne Vernon, she wrote novels and travel books.
 27. The original French line—“Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard”—is the title of a poem by Mallarmé, published in *Cosmopolis*, London and Paris (May 1897).
 28. NCB errs on the date. The United States declared war against Germany on 6 April 1917. That year Easter Sunday fell on 8 April. Louÿs’s beloved older half-brother, Georges Louis (born in 1847), died of influenza on 7 April 1917. A diplomat, Georges had served as French Ambassador to Russia.
 29. Paul Valéry (1871–1945), French poet, critic, and essayist; he is the subject of a lengthy chapter in NCB’s *Adventures*. Louÿs’s first book, *Astarté* (1891), contained seventeen poems from *La Conque* plus eight new pieces.
 30. Valéry’s long poem *La Jeune Parque* (The Young Fate) appeared in 1917. Louÿs paraphrases the opening line from Keats’ poem *Endymion*.
 31. Renée Vivien’s real name was Pauline Tarn.
 32. Renée’s stationary had a garland of violets across the top, in memory of her first love, Violet Shilleto (c. 1880–1901).
 33. The Pre-Raphaelite poet and artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) was one of Louÿs’s favorite poets writing in English. In a diary entry in February 1890, Louÿs changed a list of preferred authors he had drawn up for the entry of 12 February 1888, crossing out Byron and inserting Rossetti. The lines which Louÿs quotes in English are from Rossetti’s poem “A Last Confession” (1848) (lines 230–31).
 34. At its height, Louÿs’s personal library contained some twenty-one thousand volumes.
 35. Baroness Antoinette (Renée) de Brimont (d. 1943), grand-niece of Lamartine, poet, author of a book on the birds of France, translator of Rabindranath Tagore, and close friend of the Lithuanian-born poet Oscar Venceslas de Milosz.
 36. For sixty years, from 1909, NCB lived at 20, rue Jacob (6th arron-

- dissement). For a time during World War I, Big Bertha, a large-calibre German gun which the French named after Frau Bertha Krupp of the armament family, shelled Paris from a range of seventy-five miles. When the rue Jacob seemed unsafe, NCB moved for a while to the 16th arrondissement. At 52, rue des Vignes stood the Boulainvilliers train station.
37. In 1902, Louÿs moved from 147, boulevard Maiesherbes to 29, hameau de Boulanvilliers. His modest red-brick house, set in the calm of the small private block, remained his home until his death in 1925.
 38. Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), a leading authority on Italian Renaissance art. NCB had just met Berenson at the home of Salomon Reinach (1858–1932), French philologist, archaeologist, and art historian.
 39. Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808–1889), French poet, novelist, and critic. His novel *Une Vieille Maîtresse* (An Old Mistress) appeared in 1851.
 40. In 1918, deeply in debt and with his credit exhausted, Louÿs was obliged to sell part of his library. Before the auction took place, a wealthy amateur named Émile Mayen contacted Louÿs through a friend. Mayen paid 300,000 francs for 708 items. Nothing in relative correspondence indicates that Louÿs was allowed to keep the volumes.

4. Anatole France: Among the Amazons

1. Anatole France, pseudonym of Jacques-Anatole-François Thibault (1844–1924), novelist, critic, and man of letters, whose style combined erudition, subtlety, irony, and love of beauty and pagan antiquity. His works include *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* (1881), *Thaïs* (1890), *La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque* (At the Sign of the Queen Pédauque) (1893), *L'Île de pingouins* (Penguin Island) (1908), and *Les Dieux ont soif* (The Gods Are Thirsty) (1912). For many years he was associated with Mme Arman de Caillavet, née Leon-tine Lippmann (1844–1910), whose salon was a center of French literary life. She encouraged and inspired him for some time after his first marriage ended in divorce in 1893. France was elected to the Académie-française in 1896, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1921.

2. Yvonne Serruys-Mille (d. 1953), sculptress-wife of the French writer Pierre Mille (1864–1941). Anatole France was a pillar of her salon, held on Saturdays at 15, quai de Bourbon, and frequented by sculptors (Rodin and Bourdelle), politicians (Briand, Berthelot), and academicians (Seignobos). In the first volume of her *Mémoires*, the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre recalls Anatole France's remark: "Ah! dear Yvonne Serruys! no one talks like her; I should like to talk like her! My writing may be pretty fair, but I am not so good at talking." Gramont, *Au temps des équipages* (Paris: Grasset, 1928): 4; English translation, as *Pomp and Circumstance*, by Brian W. Downs (New York: Cape and Smith, 1929): 20.
3. Ohanian, Armenian dancer who had a brief affair with NCB.
4. Armen Ohanian, *Dancer of Shamahka* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1918), memoirs that included an account of the massacre of the Armenians by the Cossacks and Tartars. In 1897 and 1916, Anatole France participated in demonstrations on behalf of Armenia, whose citizens had been massacred in Turkey in 1895 and 1896; in 1915, over 1,750,000 Armenians had been deported by the Turks to Syria and Mesopotamia, with about 600,000 of them dying or being killed en route.
5. In her bilingual book of verse *Poems & poèmes: Autres alliances* (Poems and Poems: Other Alliances) (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1920), NCB included a piece entitled "A Parisian Roof Gardenv in 1918," which proposes an evening of music, feasting, and love under the night sky. She was perhaps describing Armen's home.
6. Jean-Jacques Brousson (1878–1958), for five years from the summer of 1904, France's secretary, until his dismissal in Argentina during France's South American lecture tour. He wrote three books about his time with France.

Mme Emma France, née Laprévotte (c. 1871–1930), originally the maid to Mme Arman de Caillavet, became the second Mme France on 11 October 1920.

Émile Antoine Bourdelle (1861–1929), pupil of Rodin, executed the sculpture and decorative paintings in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, as well as a portrait bust of Anatole France, whom he met at Saint-Cloud (1919), among many other works.

Kees Van Dongen (1877–1968), Dutch painter who lived in Paris from 1897. A creator of satirical pictures for newspapers, he became a successful painter of "cruel" portraits of the rich and fashionable.

He said France sat “like an angel,” but the subject was less impressed with the finished portrait, in which he thought he had the air of “un Camembert qui coule” (“a runny Camembert”), and would not have the work in his home.

Charles Rappoport (1865–1941), an old friend of Anatole France and a leader of the Communist movement who sought to enlist France’s support for the cause; France contributed fifty francs but was ignorant of the party or the cause.

Mme Caillavet died early in the morning of 11 January 1910; her last words were “Gaston, M. Fr. . . .” France’s parting remarks to her the previous evening had been, “My back is aching, Madame—I am off.”

7. In the French text, NCB parodies the popular song “Sur le pont / D’Avignon / L’on y danse, / L’on y danse” (“On the bridge of Avignon, one dances and dances”) when she writes “A Saint-Cloud, chez Couchoud, l’on y pense, l’on y pense.”
8. *Les Nations*, published weekly in Paris from 1917, under the editorship of R. de Marmande.
9. Georges de Porto-Riche (1849–1930), French dramatist, an innovator of the *théâtre d’amour*, dramas of psychological analysis that studied the relations between people in love. In his journal, the essayist and man of letters Paul Léautaud (1872–1956) commented that Porto-Riche could never gain entry to the Académie in 1923 because he was Jewish; he was in fact elected to the Académie in 1923.
10. Remy de Gourmont, critic, essayist, novelist. He is the subject of the following chapter in *Adventures*.

5. *Remy de Gourmont: The Amazon’s Friend*

1. Remy de Gourmont (1858–1915), French critic, essayist, novelist, author of nearly one hundred volumes of fiction, verse, and essays; one of the founders of *Le Mercure de France* and, for nearly twenty years, one of its leading contributors; principal critic of the Symbolist movement (certain of his verses were in this vein). In his thirties he contracted the skin disease lupus, which left his face disfigured and turned him into a virtual recluse. He met NCB in the summer of 1910, and later ventured out more under her guidance. He published a series of essays dedicated to and influenced by her:

Lettres à l'amazone (Letters to the Amazon) every two weeks from January 1912 until October 1913 in the *Mercure*. A more personal series, published in 1926, was entitled *Lettres intimes à l'amazone* (Intimate Letters to the Amazon). The first collection gave NCB her nickname, "The Amazon," as well as the life-long reputation of having inspired one of the finest intellects of her day. Gourmont also appears in NCB's *Souvenirs indiscrets* (Indiscreet Recollections) (1960).

2. Marie Anne de Vichy-Chamrond, Marquise du Deffand de la Lande (1697–1780), ran a salon in Paris frequented by aristocrats and such literary figures as Voltaire and Montesquieu. A principal friendship when she was elderly and blind was with Horace Walpole (1717–1797), member of Parliament, author (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1764) and playwright (*The Mysterious Mother*, 1768). From 1765, they maintained a close and interesting correspondence. When the Marquise died, she left Walpole her papers and her dog Tonton.
3. André Rouveyre (1879–1962), French writer, cartoonist, memoirist, and illustrator of Gourmont's *Lettres intimes à l'amazone*. He published a caricature of NCB showing her with stubble on her chin in *Mercure de France* 101 (16 February 1913): 735. He received a chapter in *Adventures*.
4. Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre (1875–1954). Her "Belated Gift of Flowers" appeared in the *Mercure de France* 117 (1 October 1916): 410–17. She is the subject of a chapter in *Adventures*.
5. Jean de Gourmont (1877–1928), brother of Remy de Gourmont, poet, novelist, contributor to the *Mercure de France*. The publishing firm Les Éditions de la Sirène was founded in 1918, by the writers Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961) and Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), and brought out both books and musical scores. The Gourmont exhibition, at the Sirène's offices, 30, rue de La Boétie, opened on 20 June 1924, and contained portraits, photographs, manuscripts, first editions, and furniture associated with the author. The previous month, a plaque had been dedicated with due ceremony to mark Gourmont's home, 71, rue des Saints-Pères, on the Left Bank. M Gauthier is unidentified.
6. *Chapelle ardent*, a chapel or resting place for kings or honored persons when lying in state, so named from the many candles lit

around the catafalque; the name is now applied to a mortuary chapel.

7. René Quinton (1867–1925), French physiologist. He was among Gourmont's friends—along with NCB's sister, Laura, and the French philosopher and critic Jules de Gaultier (1858–1942)—who spoke briefly about the writer on Fridays during the exhibition.
8. Paul Escoube (1881–1928), *Woman and the Feeling of Love in the Works of Remy de Gourmont* (1925); originally published in two parts in the *Mercure de France* 159 (1 October 1922): 5–59; (15 October): 333–61.
9. Literally, *fusion* means “melting” or “melted (molten) state.” The effigy is an image, particularly on a coin. NCB would seem to mean that indulging in memories about Gourmont would harden his image in her, and she wants to keep it fluid.
10. The source of the quote is unidentified.
11. Matthew 8:22 and Luke 9:60; quoted in English in the text.
12. NCB hated funerals. According to Bettina Bergery, a constant friend and frequent caller, NCB was “a materialist and saw no reason to make a fuss when someone died; ‘Funerals? Why trail after a worn-out dress the owner has no more use for?’ ” She did, however, attend the funeral of Count Robert de Montesquiou in 1921; see Wickes, *Amazon*: 107, 254.
13. Gourmont's masterpiece was *Lettres à l'amazon*.
14. Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza (1632–1677), Dutch philosopher, exponent of pantheism, and the subject of a book by Couchoud (1902, 1924). François-Marie Arouet, generally known as Voltaire (1694–1778). Gourmont acquired a reputation for his erotic fiction.
15. Gourmont had provided a preface for André Puget's verse drama *La Nuit blanche* (The White Night) (n.d.).
16. Gourmont dressed in a coarse robe of monk's cloth.
17. These cruises on the Seine took place in the summer of 1911.
18. Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949), Belgian poet and Symbolist dramatist of such plays as *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892) and *L'Oiseau bleu* (The Blue Bird, 1909). The idea of death figured in his work, along with the later interest in mysticism and the occult. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911.

Saint-Wandrille, a village in NW France, 28 miles WNW of Rouen, has celebrated ruins of a Benedictine abbey founded in the seventh century by St. Wandrille. Burned down in the thirteenth

- century, then rebuilt, it was practically destroyed by the Huguenots; restored, it suffered greatly during the French Revolution. Maeterlinck rented the abbey (which he had hoped to buy) from the Benedictines and, between 1907 and 1914, spent every summer there, until the war made evacuation essential.
19. Gourmont wrote a collection of literary criticism entitled *Le Latin mystique* (Mystical Latin) (1892).
 20. Motorcycling was one of Maeterlinck's passions.
 21. Probably Renée Dahon (c. 1893–), diminutive actress who met Maeterlinck in 1911 while rehearsing two small roles in his *L'Oiseau bleu*. They were married in February 1919.
 22. Georgette Leblanc (1869–1941), singer and actress who met Maeterlinck in January 1895. She was his companion from the spring of 1897 until his marriage to Renée Dahon in 1919. Leblanc subsequently became the lover of Margaret Anderson (1886–1973), founder and principal editor of *The Little Review*.
 23. In a post-script to his "Lettre intime" *Mercure de France* (15 June 1911): 90, Gourmont mentioned to NCB that he was writing "Epilogues quotidiens" ("Daily Epilogues") for *La France*. A work entitled *Les Idées du Jour* (Ideas of the Day), dating from May–September 1915, was published posthumously in 1918.
 24. Gourmont was born at Château de la Motte, Bazoches-en-Houlme (Orme), in Normandy.
 25. Gourmont, Remy de, *Lettres à l'amazone* (Paris: Crès, 1914).
 26. NCB's signal was two rings of the doorbell *chez* Gourmont.

6. Marcel Proust

1. Paul Morand (1888–1976), French diplomat, writer of predominantly cynical short stories and of travel books, and member of the Académie-française. The *Bal* was a popular charity event.
2. *Tendres stocks* (Green Shoots) (1921), Morand's book of three short stories based on love affairs of the young diplomat in London during the early years of World War I. Proust wrote a preface for the volume and referred to one of its stories, *Clarisse*, in the concluding section of *A la recherche, Le temps trouvé* (Time Regained), posthumously published in 1927.
3. Cécile Sorel (1873–1966), actress at the Comédie-Française; from 1903, she was a *sociétaire* (full member of the company) until her

retirement in 1933, as the theatre's *doyenne* (oldest living leading lady). Thereafter, she starred in a new nude-Negress-ostrich-plume revue at the Casino, where she recited Molière and Sacha Guitry; see Flanner, *Paris Was Yesterday* (1972): 106.

4. André Gide (1869–1951), French novelist, dramatist, and critic; winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947.
5. “Ode,” in Paul Morand’s volume of free verse, *Lampes à arc* (Arc Lamps) (1920). The opening word in the Ode, *Ombre* (Shadow), recalls the French title of Proust’s second volume in *A la recherche, A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Within a Budding Grove), published in June 1919.
6. Proust kept his bedroom windows tightly closed to exclude dust and pollen that would aggravate his asthma and hay fever; the air in the room was thick with inhalants.
7. Céleste Albaret (1891–1984), Proust’s nurse, cook, housekeeper, and comforter from 1912 until his death in 1922.
8. In August 1910, Proust had cork walls installed in the bedroom of his apartment at 102, boulevard Haussmann to insulate him from street noise and the clatter of neighbors and servants.
9. Here, Morand probably refers to Proust’s visits to a male brothel operated from the autumn of 1911, by Albert Le Cuziat at the Hôtel Marigny, 11, rue de l’Arcade. Certain of its furnishings had belonged to Proust’s late parents; the writer, having no need of the items, gave them to Le Cuziat.
10. NCB’s book, *Pensées d’une amazone* (Thoughts of an Amazon), appeared in 1920. At Morand’s suggestion, she sent the work to Proust in September 1920, with the inscription, “for Monsieur Marcel Proust, whose comprehension merits this unexpurgated copy.” She also included an invitation to her Temple to Friendship.
11. The *Eclogues* (or Bucolics), by the Latin poet Virgil (70–19 B.C.); the *Symposium*, by the Greek philosopher Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.). In French, *Le Banquet* (Symposium) is also the name of a literary review Proust helped found in 1892; it ran for eight issues. Lucien (or Lucian) (c. 120–200), Greek satirical writer.
12. The epigraph to *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (Cities of the Plain)—“La femme aura Gomorrhe, et l’homme aura Sodome”—was taken from Alfred de Vigny’s poem “La Colère de Samson” (“The Anger of Samson”) (1839, line 78). NCB also quotes the verse at the conclusion of this “adventure.”

13. The third section of *A la recherche, Le Côté de Guermantes* (The Guermantes Way), Part I, was published on 25 October 1920; Part II appeared on 2 May 1921.
14. Proust's lapse for NCB's Temple to Friendship.
15. *Sodome et Gommorhe*, Part I, was published at the end of *Le Côté de Guermantes*, II, on 2 May 1921. Part II, the last section published in Proust's lifetime, came out on 2 May 1922. Proust was awarded the Prix Goncourt (worth 5,000 francs) on 10 December 1919, and he became a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur on 25 September 1920. His funeral included the honors due a Chevalier.
16. *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil), Baudelaire's collection of poems about the antagonism between good (*idéal*) and evil (*spleen*), appeared in 1857, meriting him prosecution and a fine for offenses to public morals. *Les Épaves* (The Wreckage) (1866) contains twenty-three poems, including six banned from *Fleurs du Mal*.
17. From Baudelaire's poem, "La servante au grand coeur dont vous étiez jalouse" ("The Big-Hearted Servant of Whom you are Jealous"), in *Tableaux Parisiens* (Parisian Scenes), added to the second edition of *Fleurs du Mal* (1861).
18. When NCB moved from Neuilly to the rue Jacob in 1909, she sold her horses and bought a Cab Renault, possibly the first automobile in that quarter of Paris.
19. Le Théâtre-Français, also known as La Comédie-Française, is the site of this incident. Mme Adolphe de Rothschild, née Julie de Rothschild (1830–1907), wife of Baron Adolphe de Rothschild (1823–1900). Constance Gladys, Lady de Grey, Marchioness of Ripon (1859–1917), a lofty English beauty called "Ten Degrees below Freezing"; sister of the fourteenth Earl of Pembroke, she married de Grey, her second husband, in 1885.
20. From Alfred de Vigny's poem, "La Maison du Berger" ("The House of Berger") "The Shepherd's Caravan"; section III, line 84.
21. In early October 1921, Proust accidentally poisoned himself by taking the enormous overdose of seven one-gram capsules of veronal, dial, and opium; he had thought that each capsule contained only one-tenth of a gram.
22. Big Bertha, a German gun that shelled Paris during World War I from a range of seventy-five miles; German bombing planes were called Gothas.

23. Proust visited NCB at 20, rue Jacob toward November 1921. He died on 18 November 1922.
24. That "territory" included literature and lesbianism.
25. The character of Mme de Guermantes is based on Elisabeth de Caraman-Chimay, Comtesse de Greffulhe (1860–1953), a patroness of musical and artistic events, whose laugh was famous for its silvery quality.
26. In Paris, express letters were transmitted by pneumatic tube and were called *pneumatiques* or, simply, *pneus*.
27. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (1880–1945), French poet and prose writer; the subject of a short chapter in *Adventures*.
28. Brocéliande, a vast forest in Brittany, known today as the Forest of Paimpont, was the setting for many medieval romances. In Arthurian lore, it was inhabited by Merlin. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus was born in neighboring Normandy.
29. Reynaldo Hahn (1875–1947), Venezuelan-born pianist, singer, and composer, who was a close friend of Proust.
30. The source of the quote is unidentified, as is the exact subject of the *pneumatique*.
31. In 1922, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus published her translation of six poems by Poe. She also included some of his poems in a collection that appeared posthumously in 1951.
32. "Hommage à Marcel Proust" ("Homage to Marcel Proust") appeared in a special number of *La Nouvelle Revue française* (January 1923). Among the fifty-six contributors were Reynaldo Hahn, Jean Cocteau, Paul Valéry, André Gide, John Middleton Murry, Ortega y Gasset, and Ellen Fitzgerald. Paul Morand's reminiscences, "Notes," are found on pp. 93–95.
33. Sir Walter Scott the novelist.
34. The Eleusinian Mysteries were religious rites in honor of Ceres, goddess of grain, which originated in an agrarian cult performed at Eleusis in Attica and were later taken over by the Athenian state for partial celebration in Athens. The Mysteries were abolished by the Emperor Theodosius about the end of the fourth century A.D. As little is known about the chief rites, the phrase is applied to anything deeply mysterious.
35. The last line from Lord Alfred Douglas's poem "Two Loves" (dated September 1892; published in *The Chameleon*, I, [December 1894]:

26–28), quoted during the trial of his lover Oscar Wilde in 1895. At that time Wilde defined “the love that dare not speak its name” as “such a great affection of an elder for a younger man. . . . It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it,” quoted in H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (1948; new and enlarged ed. 1962; New York: Dover, 1973): 201. Here, NCB means that, in order to describe lesbian love, which he cannot possibly experience, Proust assimilates it to male homosexuality, that is, to whatever acquaintance he may have with it—and that, she says, cannot be done.

7. Rainer Maria Rilke: Belated Appreciation

1. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) was born in Prague, and lived in Paris, Italy, Austria, Scandinavia, and Switzerland. His works reflect a deep lyrical and mystical quest for a spiritual and aesthetic ideal. Many critics acknowledge him as the greatest lyric poet of the twentieth century, with such compositions as *The Lay of the Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke* (1899), *Poems from the Book of Hours* (1899–1902), *The Life of the Virgin Mary* (1913), *Duino Elegies* (1923), and *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923). His prose includes *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), *Stories of God* (1900), *Rodin* (1903; he acted as Rodin’s secretary from 1905 to 1906), and *Letters to a Young Poet* (1929).
2. Edmond Jaloux (1878–1949), French novelist and literary critic, whose book on Rilke appeared in 1927.
3. In Wagner’s music drama *Parsifal* (1882), the sorceress Kundry, who laughed at Christ on the cross, served both the Knights of the Grail and their enemy, the magician Klingsor. In vain she attempts to seduce Parsifal. Years later, repentant and devoted to the service of the Grail, Kundry ministers to Parsifal, who baptizes her, allowing her to die forgiven.
4. Maurice Betz made the 1926 French translation of Rilke’s *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. Page references to the *Notebooks* in the following notes are to the English translation of *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* by M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1949). Translations from *The Notebooks* in the text of *Adventures* are mine.
5. In 1922, W. Reinhard, a Swiss patron, provided Rilke with the

Château de Muzot (Valais, Switzerland) as a congenial environment in which to work. In three weeks in February he produced *Die Sonette an Orpheus* (two groups) and five additional *Duineser Elegien*.

6. NCB made this statement in her poem on the death of Remy de Gourmont, quoted in her chapter on him in *Adventures*.
7. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 35.
8. NCB held her salon on Fridays from 5 to 8 P.M.
9. In Remy de Gourmont's novel *Une nuit au Luxembourg* (A Night in the Luxembourg) (1906), treating of religion and philosophy, a god walks in the Luxembourg Gardens of Paris, changing a winter night into a spring morning.
10. In addition to *Les Cahiers de Malte Laurids Brigge* (Paris: Émile Paul, 1926), French translations of Rilke's prose include *Histories du bon Dieu* (Geschichten von lieben Gott, 1927) and *Auguste Rodin* (1928), all done by Maurice Betz.
11. This "method" is probably Valéry's theory of "arithmetica universalis" which he attempted to elucidate in two letters written in December 1897 and January 1898 to his confidant Gustave Fourment. According to this "method," as he termed it, all human knowledge was to be unified on a mathematical basis.
12. Rilke's book was perhaps *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, which was begun in Rome in the winter of 1903-4, but not completed until March 1910, in Paris.
13. On 9 June 1894, NCB sailed for Europe in the company of two sisters, Grace and Carol Lee, with Miss Ely (of Miss Ely's School for Girls, in New York) as chaperone. The summer was to be dedicated to northern Europe. Germany was particularly attractive to tourists interested in music, and for several years, NCB had been studying the violin. She spent September in Jena, and described herself as "very bored and tired of life." During her six-month stay in Dresden, she took violin lessons from Herr Konzertmeister Petri, tried unsuccessfully to master German, and practiced fencing and dancing.
14. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 79.
15. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 120.
16. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 138.
17. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 174-75. Elisabeth (Bettina) von Arnim (1789-1859), wife of the poet Ludwig Achim von Arnim, met Goethe

when she was twenty-two (scarcely a child); she based her first book, *Correspondence of Goethe with a Child* (1835), on her letters to the German poet and author. As Norton indicates, in daily submission to the laws of the external world, she believed in a continuous revelation on one's self through nature, and vice versa. Bettina herself exclaimed, "I seem to be plunged in everything I look at"; see Rilke, *Notebooks*, notes: 229–30.

18. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 177.
19. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 179.
20. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 193.
21. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 200. Dika (or Mnasidica), Anactoria, Gyrinno, and Atthis were pupils of the Greek poetess Sappho (fl. 7th century B.C.), who addresses and speaks of them in her songs. Anactoria's departure with a Greek soldier figures in Swinburne's poem *Anactoria*. Renée Vivien referred to NCB as "Atthis" in some of her poems.
22. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 200. Louise Labbé (or Labé) (c. 1525–1565), French poetess; at the age of 16, she is said to have followed the troops of François I, disguised as a captain. After her marriage to a wealthy rope-maker, she was called "la belle cordière" (the beautiful rope-maker). She wrote elegies and sonnets expressing the joys and pains of love with Sapphic passion and sincerity. Rilke translated her *Four and Twenty Sonnets*.
23. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 203.
24. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 208.
25. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 208. The line comes from Rilke's own French version of a German song that appears in Betz's French translation; see Rilke, *Notebooks*, notes: 235–36.
26. Rilke, *Notebooks*: 212.
27. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), Swedish scientist, mystic, and philosopher, author of over forty books on theology. *Elective Affinities* (*Die Wahlverwandschaften*), Goethe's novel in two parts, was published in 1809.
28. The source of the quote is unidentified.

8. *Fleg, Then Zangwill, Then Fleg*

1. The writer Edmond Flegenheimer, called Edmond Fleg (1874–1963), was born in Geneva. During his long career, he wrote plays,

poems, novels, and essays, all influenced by the literary and religious traditions of Israel, and celebrating the destinies of the Jewish people.

2. *La Bête*, a play in four acts, first performed on 2 April 1910 at the Théâtre Antoine; published in Paris the same year.
3. *Le Démon*, published in 1906.
4. Chana Orlova (or Orloff) (1888–1968), Russian sculptress born in the Ukraine, settled in Paris in 1911, and became a naturalized French citizen in 1926. She worked in wood, cement, copper, marble, and stone.
5. *L'Enfant prophète* appeared in 1906.
6. London-born Israel Zangwill (1864–1926) was one of the outstanding Jewish writers in English, hailed as “the Dickens of the ghetto” because of his humor, satire, and gifts of observation and painting and as the “most striking” Anglo-Jewish genius since Disraeli. Among his novels are *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) and *King of the Schnorrers* (1894). His play *Melting Pot* (1908) gave wide circulation to that phrase. In 1903, he married Edith Ayrton (1875–1945), a novelist active in the Feminist movement. Thereafter, Zangwill became more concerned about a world religion of brotherhood and love, according equal rights to Christians and Jews, to men and women. With Theodore Herzl, Zangwill was one of the early leaders of the Zionist movement, which sought to secure a Jewish state.
7. In Luke 10:38–42, Martha, sister of Mary of Bethany, busies herself acting as Christ’s hostess; she prepares a meal for her guest while Mary sits at His feet. When Martha complains about having to do all the work, Christ defends Mary’s choice of “the best part,” which “will not be taken away from her.” Henceforward, Martha typifies the active life; her sister, the contemplative.
8. La Gare du Nord is the Paris station for trains to and from such northern points as Boulogne, Calais, Lille, Belgium, and Northern Germany; la Gare de Lyon is the terminus of the railway from Paris to Lyon and the Mediterranean (that is, P.-L.-M.), as well as Switzerland, via Geneva, and to Italy.
9. At the time, Zangwill was associated with the Zionist cause and its search for a homeland for displaced Jews. Palestine was in the hands of the Turkish government, and the possibility of Jewish autonomy there seemed beyond hope. In 1905, Zangwill broke with the Zionists and allied himself with the Jewish Territorial Organi-

zation (JTO), whose primary object was the acquisition of an autonomous Jewish homeland anywhere in the world.

10. Vincent O'Sullivan (1872–1940), Irish-American poet and essayist who spent most of his life in Paris.
11. The Pikes, NCB's maternal ancestors, were poor German Jewish immigrants to America who soon translated the original name—Hecht—into its English equivalent. NCB took pride in her Jewish blood and was amused to think of the Puritan forebears on her father's side.
12. Edmond Fleg, *Anthologie juive* (Jewish Anthology) (Paris: Les Éditions G. Crés et C., 1923, 1924).
13. The exact nature of the banquet and the people named are unidentified.

9. *Gabriele D'Annunzio: At Home*

1. Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938), poet, dramatist, novelist, nationalist, politician, born in Pescara, Abruzzi, Italy. At the outbreak of World War I, he advocated Italian intervention of the side of the Allies. His daring exploits with the army and air force during the war made him a hero. In 1919, he occupied Fiume, to prevent its incorporation in the newly formed Yugoslav state; after his headquarters were bombed in December 1920, he abdicated his authority. He spent his last years at Gardone, on Lake Garda. Among his many lovers were the Italian actress Eleonora Duse (1859–1924) and NCB's long-time intimate, the American artist Romaine Brooks (1874–1970).
2. Maurice Barrès (1862–1923), French novelist, essayist, and politician, originally advocated the *culte de moi*; later, he understood that the individual was dependent on the group and tied by blood to the soil of his ancestors.
3. That is, with Philippe and Hélène Barthelot.
4. In his quest to keep Dalmatia a part of Italy, d'Annunzio spoke from the Capitol in Rome on 6 May 1919, and unfurled a flag that was to fly over Trieste; he draped the banner with twenty yards of crêpe, symbolizing the mourning that was to be observed until the Dalmatian cities had been recovered.
5. On 16 January 1916, d'Annunzio was forced by the wind to land his seaplane on a sandbank. Thrown against the machine-gun in front

of him, he lost his sight completely for several hours. The sight in the right eye was lost; that in the left was saved by rendering d'Annunzio completely immobile for a time in total darkness.

6. Arditi, Legionaries who followed d'Annunzio in his campaign for Fiume.
7. D'Annunzio stood for his first portrait by Romaine Brooks at St.-Jean-de-Luz in 1912; by this time, their love affair had ended, to be replaced by a friendship lasting until his death. Against a background of waves dashing against a breakwater on the Atlantic coast, Brooks painted him as the martyred victim of fate, a man battling inhuman odds. The work was a success in Paris, and Léonce Bénédite, conservator of the Musée du Luxembourg, added the work to his collection. This painting is probably the main reason Brooks was awarded the Légion d'Honneur several years later.
8. D'Annunzio moved to Paris in March 1910, and remained for five years. He was almost as popular in France as in Italy, and his stay was generally delightful.
9. While living in Venice during the war, he had a collection of clocks which he would set going. Romaine Brooks described his small palace on the Grand Canal as an eighteenth-century chocolate box full of bibelots.
10. From September 1914 to March 1916, d'Annunzio lived in the seventeenth-century Hôtel de Châlons-Luxembourg, at 26, rue Geoffroy-l'Ansier, Paris. In the summer of 1910, Romaine Brooks took a house, the Villa St. Dominique, outside the village of Moulleau, five kilometers from the summer resort of Arcachon on the Bay of Biscay. D'Annunzio arrived in early July. Here he began his drama *Saint Sébastien*, and Brooks made sketches for her large portrait of him, completed at St.-Jean-de-Luz. When d'Annunzio fell behind in his rent payments, the house was sold to M Philip-pard, a wealthy merchant from Bordeaux, despite efforts by Brooks and NCB to save it. The new owner allowed extra time to move out d'Annunzio's effects. Brooks purchased the library when it was sold to pay creditors, and she restored the books to d'Annunzio, who later repaid her. Perhaps depending on his popularity in France, d'Annunzio hoped that the French government would make him a gift of the villa at Arcachon; that it didn't rankled deeply.
11. The book was probably NCB's *Pensées d'une amazone* (1920), containing her conclusions on Sapphic love.

12. D'Annunzio moved to Gardone Riviera after World War I, and spent his last seventeen years constructing his memorial, Il Vittoriale degli Italiani (The Victory Monument of the Italians).
13. D'Annunzio wrote *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian) at Arcachon during the summer and autumn of 1910. It ran for twelve performances, between 29 May and 19 June 1911, at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris. The sets were by Léon Bakst, the music by Debussy, the lead played by Ida Rubinstein (who was almost nude in one scene).
14. The French poet Paul Valéry visited Il Vittoriale in 1924, fascinated by the figure of the poet-prince of whom the Symbolists had dreamed and to whom d'Annunzio had given life.
15. D'Annunzio created a cult to Francis of Assisi, collecting countless statues of the saint and wrapping the Franciscan cord around various objects. In front of a window from which he had fallen stood a bronze statue of the saint, wearing a belt with a pistol attached: "St. Francis is the first Fascist and I am the last Franciscan," he claimed. In French slang, *poire* (pear) is a person's head; also, a dupe, a sucker.
16. The various rooms in the house, containing some 2,500 objects, are described in detail by Philippe Jullian, *d'Annunzio* (trans. Stephen Hardman, 1972): 322ff, and illustrations 38–43.
17. While living at Le Moulleau, d'Annunzio ordered casts from the Louvre of Michelangelo's *Slaves* (along with a cast of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*) to create an environment of beauty about him. D'Annunzio once explained that because the legs of the *Slaves* were too short, he had asked the great couturier Paul Poiret (1880–1944) for dressing-gowns for them. The idea of draping the statues in purple-figured velvet and adorning them with necklaces was a discovery for which d'Annunzio's architect Maroni was commended. D'Annunzio's body lay in state between the *Slaves*.
18. In 1920, the ship *Puglia* disobeyed orders and brought d'Annunzio reinforcements in Fiume. When it was decommissioned, he obtained it, had it dismantled and reassembled on the side of a hill overlooking the lake at Gardone Riviera. Sailors stood guard over the *Puglia*. At d'Annunzio's death, Mussolini ordered that a vigil over the body be held in torchlight aboard the *Puglia*.
19. NCB may refer to the Venetian pianist, organist, and singer, Luisa

- Bàccara, d'Annunzio's imperious, possessive mistress from 1919 until his death.
20. In the "Officina" or study, the only light room in the entire building, were encyclopedias, dictionaries, and volumes of the classics. The walls of the huge space were adorned with plaster casts of the Parthenon frieze and photographs of the Sistine Chapel and the frescoes of Mantegna. Dominating this agglomeration of objects was a mask of La Duse (below the wing of the *Victory of Samothrace*), which d'Annunzio would cover with a veil whenever he sat down to work.
 21. Philippe Jullian, *d'Annunzio*: 215, quotes the poet on Duse: "A noble creature chosen by me, who ruined herself for me, through vicissitudes and across the distances sends me this message: 'change wings.'"
 22. St. Anthony the abbot, also known as St. Anthony of the Desert (250–355), lived a life of great austerity, surviving on only bread and water, taken once a day after sunset. The devil supposedly attempted to frighten him from his retreat by assuming many terrible shapes, but in vain.
 23. *La Contemplazione della Morte*, written at Arcachon in 1912, was inspired by the deaths of M Bermond, his landlord, and of the Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli (1855–1912).
 24. D'Annunzio often invented romantic names for the women in his circle. Thus, Francesca d'Orsay was styled "la Basilissa Irene," as if she had sailed from Byzantium, and her dark sister Duchessa Massari became "la Reginetta Carbonilla," or "little Queen Coal"; he transformed Lysina Rucellai into Monna Lisa degli Oricellari; Romaine Brooks was "Cinerina," "The Pale One"; see Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen, 1948): 43.
 25. In Italian his motto reads *Per non dormire*.

10. Max Jacob

1. Max Jacob (1876–1944), French writer, poet, painter, and humorist, was born in Quimper (Brittany) and died in a concentration camp, the prison of La Murette, in Drancy. For many years he lived in poverty among writers and artists in Paris. In 1909, as he was entering his shabby lodging at 7, rue Ravignan, he had a vision of

Christ. After a second vision while walking down the aisle of a cinema, he was converted from his unpracticed Jewish faith to Roman Catholicism; Picasso served as his godfather. Toward 1910, he lived in a small room at 19, rue Gabrielle. From 1921, he settled at Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire, near the Benedictine abbey; his life there was interrupted by long absences in Paris or foreign countries. Writing and the practice of his faith filled his days.

2. The quote is unidentified.
3. The book is probably NCB's *Pensées d'une amazone* (1920).
4. Dr. Joseph-Charles-Victor Mardrus (1868–1949), translator of the *Arabian Nights*, and his wife, the poetess Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (1880–1945), were special friends of NCB and the subjects of separate chapters in *Adventures*. The book Jacob mentions was probably *Pensées d'une amazone*.
5. As one of the most brilliant grand horizontals of *La Belle Epoque*, Anne-Marie Chassaing (1869–1950) assumed the aristocratic name of Liane de Pougy. In 1899, she became NCB's first famous romantic interest. Her marriage, in 1910, to the Roumanian prince Georges Ghika (1884–1945) made her Princess Ghika. After the death of her husband, she became a Dominican tertiary under the name Sister Marie-Madeleine de la Penitence. Princess Ghika's relationship with Max Jacob was a fluctuating one, well charted in her diaries, Liane de Pougy, *Mes cahiers bleus* (My Blue Notebooks) (1977), translated by Diane Athill in 1979.
6. In 1926, the Ghikas were on the verge of a divorce. Liane had brought into their home a young artist, Manon Thiébaud. Georges wanted a *ménage à trois*, an idea that horrified Liane. Manon was eventually expelled and the husband and wife were reunited.
7. Mme Aurel (1882–1948), another woman of letters, further treated in the second half of *Adventures*.
8. With Picasso and Apollinaire, Jacob belonged integrally to the generation that invented Cubism. In her *Blue Notebooks*: 79, 89, Liane de Pougy records that Jacob was getting "masses of orders" for paintings and selling others from his stock. In an entry for 23–24 March 1920: 96, she also notes that "We leapt helter-skelter into a taxi to go to Max Jacob's exhibition at [art merchant Marcel] Bernheim's. No luck, it was over."
9. Jean Paulhan (1884–1968), French critic and essayist, deputy-editor of the *Nouvelle Revue française* (1925–1940); he helped

correct proof on Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe, I* (Cities of the Plain, I).

Jacob's collection of verse, *Fond de l'eau* (Bottom of the Water) (Paris: Edit de Cahiers Libres, 1927), included a trio of short conversations with God entitled "Colloque I," "Colloque II," and "Colloque III" ("Conversations I," "Conversations II," and "Conversations III").

10. NCB quotes all but the opening two lines of Jacob's "Colloque I."
11. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582), Spanish Carmelite, mystic, and author.
12. Dorothy (Dolly) Ierne Wilde (1899–1941), daughter of Oscar Wilde's elder brother Willie, bore a striking resemblance to her famous uncle. In the 1920s and 1930s she was one of NCB's lovers. NCB edited and introduced a collection of reminiscences, *In Memory of Dorothy Ierne Wilde* (Dijon: Darantière, 1951).
13. Max's sister, Mlle. Jacob, worked in an antique store run by their mother on the quay at Quimper. In her *Blue Notebooks: 45*, Liane de Pougy described her as having

a beautiful and gigantic head. Hair like Absalom's to catch in the chandeliers, huge dazzling black eyes, full plump lips, a nose out of which you could make three. . . . She's the shopkeeper who buttonholes passers-by in the street.

14. Probably a reference to NCB's *Pensées d'une amazone*.
15. The cardinal is unidentified.
16. Matthew 5:13.
17. Jacob may have in mind the common exhortation, referring to Wisdom, found in the Wisdom books of the Bible.
18. Dr. Mardrus gave a reading of Genesis at NCB's salon.
19. Baroness Franchetti, wife of Baron Alberto Franchetti (1860–1941), Italian composer of such operas as *Israël* (1888), *Cristoforo Colombo* (1892), and *Germania* (1902). Their daughter Mimi was devoted to Liane de Pougy and to NCB.
20. NCB paraphrased this line in the third paragraph of her chapter on Gertrude Stein in *Adventures*.
21. St.-Maxime, a popular winter resort on the French Riviera.
22. Compare Christ's words to the Jews: "Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him who sent me. You will seek me and will not find me; and where I am you cannot come" (John 7:33–34).

11. *Doctor Jésus-Christ Mardrus*

1. Joseph-Charles-Victor Mardrus (1868–1949), doctor and learned Orientalist, was a native of Egypt. NCB referred to him as Dr. Jésus-Christ, as did many people who thought that to be his real name. His wife was the poetess Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (1875–1945), one of NCB’s lovers. Dr. Mardrus translated the unexpurgated *Arabian Nights* into French as *Le livre des mille nuits et une nuit* (The Book of a Thousand and One Nights; 16 volumes, 1898–1904). In Proust’s *Cities of the Plain, I*: chapter ii, the Narrator’s mother regrets having given this edition to her son at Balbec, shocked as she is by the translation’s impropriety and strange orthography.
2. NCB remembered her father, Albert Clifford Barney, as strict, even stern, given to outbursts of temper. The Mardrus’s villa outside Paris contained thousands of books, and in its rose garden a tame gazelle wandered freely.
3. NCB’s fiancé was Freddy Manners-Sutton.
4. Wickes, *Amazon*: 20, 81, suggests that one of these father-daughter excursions *chez* Mardrus may have been the last time NCB saw her father, who died alone, at the age of fifty-two, in Monte-Carlo in 1902.
5. The pun also works in French, for *travail*—the noun NCB uses—can mean either *labor/work* or *labor/childbirth*.
6. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus was mentioned by Marie-Louise Fontaine, in 1913, as one of six outstanding contemporary French women writers. Comte Robert de Montesquiou was overwhelmed by her poems and invited the “marvellous young Muse” to recite some of her verses at a grand fête; quoted in George D. Painter, *Marcel Proust: a Biography* (1959; New York: Vintage, 1978), 2: 327.
7. Candide, hero of Voltaire’s philosophical novel, *Candide, ou l’Optimisme* (1759).
8. François Villon (1431–after 1463), French poet who spent his life between the tavern and the prison. Witty, ironic, and melancholic, he sounded a new note in his lyrics, in which he sang the experiences of his life.
9. André Germain (1881–1964), son of the founder of the Crédit Lyonnais bank, writer of literary reminiscences, biographer of Renée Vivien (who blamed NCB for Renée’s death), and a regular at

NCB's salon for almost its entire existence. Germain organized the dinner party described to observe what happened when people who did not get along were seated next to one another. Dr. Mardrus's nemesis on this occasion was Jeanne (Mme Lucien) Mühlfeld (d. 1953), the wife of a novelist who for more than thirty years hosted one of the most respected literary salons in Paris, first at 12, rue Galilée; then, after 1914, in her yellow drawing room at 3, rue Georgeville. Guests included Paul Valéry (whose nomination to the Académie-française she prepared), Anna de Noailles, Proust, Cocteau, Claudel, Gide, Marie Laurencin, and François Mauriac.

10. NCB did not object to Dr. Mardrus's calling her Blondie, a nickname merited from her blond hair.
11. *La Reine de Saba* (The Queen of Sheba) (1918), translated into French from Dr. Mardrus's Arabic text.
12. Mahomet (570–632), founder of Islam; though simple and frugal in his habits, he was also tolerant and brutal.
13. *Le Koran, qui est la guidance et le différenciateur*; "Traduction littérale et complète des sourates essentielles" (The Koran, which is the guidance and the differentiator; "A literal and complete translation of the essential suras") (1926).
14. Possibly a reference to Henri de Jouvenel (1876–1935), co-editor of *Le Matin*, the newspaper which, beginning in December 1910, published a fortnightly column by Colette entitled "Contes des Mille et un matins" ("Stories of a Thousand and One Mornings"). Jouvenel, known as "Sidi," became Colette's lover in 1910, and her second husband in 1912.
15. Dr. Mardrus prepared a paraphrase in French of parts of the Old Testament: Genesis, Ruth and Booz, The Book of Kings, The Book of Esther, The Song of Songs, and La djanna (1931). He read from his translation at NCB's "Friday" for Djuna Barnes, 3 June 1927.
The Authorized (or King James) Version of the Bible was produced by forty-seven scholars working at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge at the command of King James I. Begun in 1607, the Bible was published in 1611.
16. Each "chapter" of the Koran is called a "sura" (Arabic, *sūrah*, a step, a degree); each is classed by length, the longest coming at the beginning of the Koran, the shortest at the end.
17. *Le livre de la vérité de parole* (The Book of the Dead) (1929), Egyptian funerary literature, consisting of charms, spells, and for-

mulas for use by the deceased in the afterworld. Essential ideas of Egyptian religion are known through them. The earliest collection dates from the XVIII dynasty (1580–1350 B.C.).

12. *The Critical State of André Rouveyre*

1. André Rouveyre (1879–1962), French draftsman, caricaturist, writer. He provided illustrations for many works: Apollinaire's *Vitam impendere amori* (To Pay Out Life to Love) (1917) and Gourmont's *Lettres intimes à l'amazone* (Intimate Letters to the Amazon) (1926), addressed to NCB. He also wrote novels and books that recall Gourmont, Gide, Apollinaire, and Moréas. A frequent visitor to NCB's salon, he was an intimate of Gourmont and remained NCB's closest male friend for almost fifty years after Gourmont's death in 1915.
2. Virgil, *Aeneid*, XI, 648 ("At medias inter caedes exsultat Amazon"); quoted in Latin and French by Remy de Gourmont in his first "Lettre à l'amazone," *Mercure de France* (1 January 1912): 141, 143.
3. The Venusberg or the Hörselberg, in central Germany, in whose caverns, according to medieval legends, the goddess Venus held her court; it is the setting for parts of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Beardsley's *The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*.
In classical antiquity, the Gynaecium contained the women's apartments in a household; generally, the word identifies any building set aside for women. Rouveyre published *Le Gynécée, recueil précédé d'une glose par Remy de Gourmont* (1909), a collection of his unpublished sketches from 1907–1909, preceded by a commentary by Gourmont.
4. In Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock the moneylender requires a pound of flesh from Antonio the merchant as security for a loan. When Antonio defaults, Shylock demands his due. The heiress Portia disguises herself as a lawyer to defend Antonio. She warns Shylock that his own life is forfeit if, in taking his payment, he sheds one drop of Antonio's blood. She later secures mercy for the merchant.
5. Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658), Spanish prose writer and, from 1619, a Jesuit; later, Rector of the Jesuit college in Tarazona. In *El Héroe* (The Hero) (1630) he used maxims to describe the ideal man's

- qualities, and he delineated the typical courtier in *El Discreto* (The Art of Discretion) (1645). Schopenhauer translated Gracián's *El Oráculo manual* (The Manual Oracle), a system of rules for the conduct of life. Rouveyre contributed to various editions of Gracián, including *L'homme de cours, . . . précédé d'une introduction par André Rouveyre* (The Courtier, . . . with an Introduction by André Rouveyre) (1924); *Supplement à l'Homme de cours de Baltasar Gracián* (*Supplement to The Courtier by Baltasar Gracián*) (two original drawings by Rouveyre) (1928). He also wrote "Baltasar Gracián," *Mercure de France* (15 March 1924): 617-37.
6. Rouveyre's latest work is unidentified.
 7. André Rouveyre, "Discours d'expulsion de M Paul Valéry, à l'Académie-française" ("Paul Valéry's Expulsion Address to the Académie-française"), *Le crapouillot* (November 1927): 22, col. 3. The French title of Rouveyre's article puns on the *discours de réception* each new member must deliver at his or, after 1980, her formal reception. This inaugural address contains remarks on the speaker's immediate predecessor.
 8. Rouveyre's article on Valéry in *Le crapouillot*: 21-26, ran to nine columns. Elected to the Académie-française in 1925, Valéry succeeded to Anatole France's chair.
 9. Oscar Venceslas de Milosz (1877-1929), Lithuanian by birth, naturalized French in 1930, wrote poetry and prose. The quotation is from "Cantique de la Connaissance" ("Canticle of Knowledge") *La Confession de Lemuel* (The Confession of Lemuel) (1922): line 117.
 10. Scots writer Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) suffered for his adult life from dyspepsia, described as "a rat gnawing at the pit of his stomach." His biographer J. A. Froude wrote: "His disorder working on his natural irritability found escape in expressions which showed, at any rate, that he was attaining a mastery of language;" see Clubbe, ed. and abr., *Froude's Life of Carlyle* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979): 116-17.
 11. André Rouveyre, "Bad Literary News," *Le crapouillot* (January 1928): 3-6.
 12. The reference is unidentified.
 13. A reference to Valéry's election to the Académie-française.
 14. Rouveyre, "Bad Literary News," *Le crapouillot* (January 1928): 3, col. 2.
 15. André Rouveyre, *Le reclus et le retors: Gourmont et Gide* (The

Recluse and the Sly One: Gourmont and Gide) (1927). According to Wickes, *Amazon*: 163, NCB, through their common friends Pierre Louÿs and Dr. Mardrus, had known Gide before she met Gourmont, "yet Gide was so obsessed with Gourmont that as late as 1947, he declined her invitation to the salon. Gide's fear of falling under Gourmont's shadow was no doubt aggravated by a book comparing Gide unfavorably with Gourmont; the author was André Rouveyre."

16. Rouveyre, "Bad Literary News," *Le crapouillot* (January 1928): 4, col. 1.
17. André Rouveyre, *Souvenirs de mon commerce: Gourmont—Apolinaire—Moréas—Soury* (Memoirs of My Business . . .) (1921). Remy de Gourmont (1858–1915), Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), surrealist poet; Jean Moréas (1856–1910), poet; Jules Soury (1842–1915), philosopher.
18. Julien Benda (1867–1956), French critic and essayist.
19. Vincent O'Sullivan (1872–1940), American-born essayist, novelist, poet, and dramatist, who spent most of his life in France, writing in English and French, and translating a number of French works.
20. Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), a leading authority on Italian Renaissance art whom NCB met during World War I at the home of classical scholar Salomon Reinach. In the first chapter of *Traits et portraits* (Traits and Portraits) (1963), NCB describes the Berensons' civilized life in Florence in 1940. Their Villa Il Tatti, in the hills of Settignano, overlooking the city, was one of fountains, gardens, and Renaissance paintings. While Berenson was small and neat, his wife Mary (1865–1945) was tall, stately, and white-haired with a resemblance to King Lear.

13. *Paul Valéry: The Dawn of an Academician: An Attempt at Clarification*

1. Paul Valéry (1871–1945), one of the greatest French poets of the twentieth century, as well as a critic and essayist. In his early career he was strongly affected by the Symbolists, especially Mallarmé (who remained an influence). For some fifteen years (c. 1897–1912), he turned his back on creative writing, taking regular jobs to earn a living, first at the War Office, then at the Agence Havas, the French press association. After 1922, he depended on literature

alone for his livelihood. In November 1925, he was elected to the Académie-française, to the chair that fell vacant with the death of Anatole France, and, in 1937, was named to the newly created chair of poetics at the Collège de France. He gave his poetry course each winter until shortly before his death. NCB met Valéry in 1917, at the first recital of his new poem, *La Jeune Parque* (The Young Fate), held in a bomb shelter at the Paris home of Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre. NCB thought that Valéry took himself too seriously after his election as an Immortal; she joked that he behaved as if he had just given birth to a child and noted that his poetry subsequently went into a decline.

2. Valéry's philosophical tale, *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* (The Evening with Monsieur Teste), first appeared in the second and final volume of the quarterly review *Le Centaure* (Paris, 1896). The first book edition was published in 1906. The character of Edmond Teste appeared in an additional three items (in the 1920s) and five unpublished fragments.
3. NCB seems to exaggerate here. Valéry married Jeannie Gobillard on 31 May 1900. There were three children from this marriage: a son, Claude (born 14 August 1903), a daughter, Agathe (7 March 1906), and a second son, François (17 July 1916).
4. In May 1890, while attending a dinner marking the sixth centenary of the foundation of the University of Montpellier, where he had studied law, Valéry sat next to Pierre Louis (soon to become Louÿs). Through him Valéry met André Gide and was encouraged to write to Mallarmé. Valéry lived in a third-floor apartment at 40, rue de Villejust (16th arrondissement) from July 1902, until his death on 20 July 1945; in 1946, the street was renamed rue Paul-Valéry. Louÿs lived at 29, hameau de Boulainvilliers (also in the 16th). At 52, rue des Vignes (16th) stood the Boulainvilliers station, connecting the Auteuil line with that of the Champs-de-Mars, on the Left Bank of the Seine. As the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre and Romaine Brooks lived in Passy (West Paris), NCB left the rue Jacob and spent the latter part of 1917 near them in an apartment in the rue des Vignes (Vineyards Street).
5. The poem "Aurore" first appeared in *Le Mercure de France* 464 (16 October 1917): 623–25; "L'Insinuant" ("Insinuation") was initially printed in *Les Ecrits Nouveaux* II (8 June 1918): 85. *La Jeune Parque*, written between 1912 and 1917, was published in 1917.

Ostensibly the monologue of a “Young Fate,” this work represents Valéry’s first completely new poem after his return to poetry; it is his longest (512 verses) and (even according to the poet) his most obscure poem.

6. Francis de Miomandre (1880–1959), French novelist, essayist, short-story writer; author of observations, humor, and fantasy; popularizer of Spanish literature through translations. Ariel, spirit-attendant on the magician Prospero in Shakespeare’s romance, *The Tempest*.
7. Through the Mardruses, NCB met Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre (1875–1954), known familiarly as Lily. For a number of years, they were lovers and their friendship lasted nearly half a century, until the Duchesse’s death. She and her husband had a home at Nos. 67 and 69, rue Raynouard, opposite the studio and apartment (No. 74) of NCB’s great love, Romaine Brooks. NCB’s sister Laura lived on the floor below Brooks. During World War I, NCB often went to Lily’s house, with its bomb shelter. In 1917, the Duchesse rented the house and moved to Passy.
8. *Decameron*, a collection of one hundred tales by Boccaccio, completed about 1353, and represented as having been told over a ten-day period by seven ladies and three gentlemen seeking refuge in the country during the plague in Florence in 1348.
9. Valéry may be contrasting the upbeat nature of “Aurore” with his own depressed feeling at the time of this letter.
10. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919. NCB’s family had a four-story summer house in Bar Harbor, Maine, overlooking the ocean. “La Crise de l’Esprit” was written at the request of the English critic and editor John Middleton Murry (1889–1957), who published it in *The Athenaeum* (London), which he edited (1919–21). Under the heading “Letter from France,” the piece appeared in two parts: “The Spiritual Crisis” (11 April 1919): 182–84, and “The Intellectual Crisis” (2 May 1919): 279–80. *La Nouvelle Revue française* printed the French text in the August 1919 number: 321–37.
11. Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux (1636–1711), French critic and translator, royal historiographer with Racine (1677); introduced standards of literary criticism and composition and called “législateur du Parnasse” (“lawgiver of Parnassus”).

12. NCB made the first English translation of *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* (The Evening with Monsieur Teste) which appeared in *The Dial* (New York) 72 (2 February 1922): 158–68.
13. NCB bought a Cab Renault in 1909.
14. The second English translation of *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* was done by Ronald Davis, with a preface in French by Valéry (1925). NCB quotes this review in English in her note.
15. In August 1921, Valéry took his family on holiday to Perros-Guirec.
16. Sappho (fl. 7th century B.C.), greatest of the early Greek lyric poets and the first woman poet; she is associated with the islands of Lesbos and Leucas.
17. A positive variation on the negative opening of *The Evening with Monsieur Teste*—"La bêtise n'est pas mon fort"—which Valéry quotes in English, as he does the sentences on sadness in this letter and in the following one.
18. Possibly a reference to Salomon Reinach (1858–1932), French archaeologist and philologist.
19. Mme de C. T. is the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre.
20. André Germain (1881–1964), writer and biographer of Renée Vivien. His account of this evening, 11 June 1920, is reprinted in "Un Hommage à Valéry," *Têtes et Fantômes* (Heads and Phantoms) (Paris: Émile Paul, 1923) Chapter VI: 113–19. Pierre Bertin recited Valéry's poems "Palme," "Anne," "Aurore," and fragments of "Narcissus."
21. In Italian commedia dell' arte theatre, Pierrot's beloved is known variously as Columbina and Pierrette.
22. NCB's mother, Alice Pike Barney (1857–1931) became a widow in 1902, after twenty-six years of marriage. In later photographs, she appears increasingly youthful and curvaceous. In 1911, she married a male model, Christian Hemmick, who was less than half her age. At that time she was living in Paris, where Liane de Pougy saw her in January 1922, looking "frisky, alert, sparkly. . . . An incredible youthfulness runs in her veins, shines in her eyes, curls her white hair and vibrates the feathers on her hat" (*Blue Notebooks*: 140). In 1924, she moved to Hollywood, California, where she spent her last seven years.
23. A native of Georgia, Mary Livingstone King (d. 1931) was the widow of Henry Wodehouse when, in 1880, she became the third wife of Henry Cyril Paget, fourth Marquess of Anglesey (1835–

- 1898). Lady Anglesey (or “Aunt Minnie”) had known NCB since the latter’s affair with Renée Vivien, and she introduced NCB to Romaine Brooks at one of her tea parties about 1915. Liane de Pougy described her, when seen at NCB’s in 1922, as “a dowager so beautiful that even at over eighty she draws all eyes” (*Blue Notebooks*: 140). Lady Anglesey lived at Versailles, among her porcelain collections, she herself porcelain-like, with a finely chiseled, aristocratic face.
24. Maria Eugenia de Guzman, comtesse de Teba (1826–1920), a woman of great beauty, became Imperatrice Eugénie des Français in 1853, with her marriage to Napoleon III (1808–1873). After the fall of the Second Empire (September 1870), she lived mainly in retirement in England.
 25. Charles Seignobos (1854–1942), French historian, Professor at the Sorbonne from 1890.
 26. Edmond Aman-Jean (1860–1936), French painter, a friend of Georges Seurat; he executed portraits of women, genre scenes, cartoons for tapestries, and decorative works.
 27. Florent Fels (1891–1977), author, poet, art critic, founder of the left-wing review *Action* (1920), which printed articles by Apollinaire, Cocteau, Max Jacob, and Jarry, and illustrations by Braque, Derain, and Laurencin. Louis Aragon (1897–1982), French novelist and poet, one of the founders (March 1919, with André Breton and Philippe Soupault) of the review satirically named *Littérature*, the organ of the French Dada movement; he was also a founder of Surrealism (c. 1924).
 28. Janus, Roman deity who kept the gate of heaven, also the guardian of gates and doors; represented with two faces, one in front, one behind.
 29. Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), French poet, leader of the Symbolists and Decadents. François de Malherbe (1555–1628), French poet who opposed decadence and frivolity in verse, advocating pure style and concise diction. Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), French neoclassical dramatist who often employed the theme of duty versus honor, as in *Le Cid* (1636); Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585), French poet and founder of the Pléiade, a group of poets devoted to the regeneration of French as a literary language.
 30. Valéry’s poems contain several on mythological themes, including “Orphée” and “Naissance de Vénus.”

31. In Dante's *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, XX), the fortunetellers, who spent their lives looking into the future—God's prerogative—are condemned to spend eternity with their heads twisted so they can look only behind themselves and must therefore walk backwards.
32. Friday was NCB's salon day. The "other Mardrus" is Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, wife of the Orientalist Dr. J.-C. Mardrus; she was called "Princesse Amante" because her completely shaved body was as smooth and pale as an almond. For her translations of Poe, see the last notes in the chapter in *Adventures* devoted to her.

Like Baudelaire, Mallarmé considered Poe his master in poetry. He translated *The Raven* (*Le Corbeau*) for a bilingual edition illustrated by Manet (1875), and wrote a sonnet, "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe" ("The Tomb of Edgar Poe"), published in 1877. His translations of *Les Poèmes d'Edgar Poe* appeared in 1888, 1926, and 1928.
33. These words, given in English in Valéry's letter, constitute the opening line of Poe's poem "To Helen," on Helen of Troy; its ninth and tenth lines recall ". . . the glory that was Greece / And the grandeur that was Rome." Valéry wrote the sonnet "Hélène," published in 1891.
34. Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), art historian of the Italian Renaissance. Valéry's "Introduction à la methode de Léonard de Vinci" was written at the request of Mme Juliette Adam (1836–1936), founder and editor of *La Nouvelle Revue*, and published in that periodical on 15 August 1895; reprinted 1919, with an added "Note et digression." In 1926, Valéry published in *Commerce* a lengthy essay, "Léonard et les philosophes" ("Leonardo and the Philosophers"). The three pieces were reprinted in a volume entitled *Les divers Essais sur Léonard de Vinci de Paul Valéry, commentés par lui-même* (Miscellaneous Essays on Leonardo da Vinci by Paul Valéry, with his Comments) (printed 1931, offered for sale 1933), accompanied by marginal notes, written in 1929–30, and giving Valéry's later attitudes toward his earlier writings on the subject.
35. Poe's *Eureka: A Prose Poem* (published 1848) is based on his readings in Newton, Laplace, and others. It accepts intuition, as well as induction and deduction, as legitimate paths to knowledge. Valéry, deeply affected by Poe's works, notably *Eureka*, wrote an essay, "Au sujet d'Eureka," for *Introduction à Charles Baudelaire, Eureka, par Edgar Poe* (1921); reprinted in *La Revue Européenne* 3 (1 May 1923): 6–18.

36. Vincent O'Sullivan (1872–1940), American-born essayist who compiled selections from Poe in *The Raven, The Pit and the Pendulum, with . . . some accounts of the author* (1899).
37. NCB's enormous polar-bear rug, which had belonged to Liane de Pougy, remained in place beside an Empire couch in her bedroom even after she had left the rue Jacob for the Hôtel Meurice, where she died. "J. C.—" is perhaps Jules Cambon (1845–1935), diplomat and friend of NCB, and Valéry's sponsor at his reception by the Académie in 1927. "S—" is unidentified.
38. In Greek *Amazon* means "without breast." The members of this race of female warriors had their right breasts burned off, the better to draw the bow.
39. The Maritime Alps are between France and Italy; Vence, where D. H. Lawrence died in 1930, is near Nice.
40. The same or similar phrases appear in the first poem NCB printed in her "Forewarning" that introduces *Adventures*.
41. Mme Bourdet-Pozzi, née Catherine Pozzi (1882–1934), French lyric poet, first wife of the dramatist and Director of la Comédie-Française, Edouard Bourdet (1887–1945).
Mme Marie de Régnier (1875–1963), second daughter of poet José-Maria de Heredia (1842–1905), and wife of the poet and novelist Henri de Régnier (1864–1936); under the pseudonym Gérard d'Houville, she was herself a poet and prose writer on such themes as love, nature, death, and classical antiquity.
42. An adherent of Sufism, a system of Mohammedan mysticism, developed, especially in Persia, into an elaborate symbolism much used by the poets.
43. Valéry's poem, "Ebauche d'un Serpent" ("Silhouette of a Serpent") first appeared in *La Nouvelle Revue française* 94 (1 July 1921): 5–17. He had read it *chez* NCB on 2 June 1921.
44. "The Old Man of the Mountains" (Sheikh-al-Jebal) Hasan ben Sabbah, founder (c. 1090) of the terrorist group the Assassins, who operated in Lebanon, Persia, and Iraq. Given its context in the letter, the phrase could be a cryptic allusion to the sexual urge.
45. That is, Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée trains leaving from the Gare de Lyon, Paris.
46. To earn a living, Valéry worked at the Agence Havas, the French press association, from the summer of 1900, that is, from shortly

after his marriage until February 1922. He served as private secretary to its director, Edouard Lebey, until Lebey's death.

47. Jean Gaultier-Boissière's article on Valéry's "Commercial Genius" was printed in *Le crapouillot* (Noël 1927): 33–41. NCB's quote is found on p. 34.
48. NCB's scheme (on which she collaborated with Ezra Pound) was known as "Bel Esprit" ("Fine Mind") and was intended to relieve selected writers of their financial worries so that they could concentrate on their craft.
49. NCB quotes from her "Forewarning" at the beginning of *Adventures*.
50. The American-born poet and critic T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) was chosen for the "Bel Esprit" project for being the best poet in his language, as Valéry was in his. In 1922, Eliot had just published *The Waste Land*, and Pound wanted to relieve him of his job at a bank. Embarrassed by "Bel Esprit," Eliot refused the charity offered. Richard Aldington (1892–1962), British poet and novelist, husband of the American poet Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) (1886–1961) from 1913 to 1937; he translated Remy de Gourmont's *Lettres à l'amazone* (1931). May Sinclair (1869–1946), writer of psychological novels, influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis.
51. "Versailles" probably refers to Marguerite (Chapin) Caetani, Princesse di Bassiano (1881–1963), a native of Connecticut, who resided in the town of Versailles, near Paris. She came to Europe to study singing, then married Roffredo Caetani, Prince di Bassiano. She was a generous subscriber to "Bel Esprit." "Rue de l'Odéon" perhaps alludes to Sylvia Beach's bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, at 12, rue de l'Odéon, and to Adrienne Monnier's *librairie*, La Maison des amis des livres (The House of the Friends of Books), at 7, rue de l'Odéon. Valéry was seen in both establishments from about 1919.
52. NCB's American intervention in the affairs of a French poet incited others to compete with her "Bel Esprit" plan. Adrienne Monnier organized a rival group to raise funds for Valéry.
53. Lucien Fabre (1889–1952), dramatist, novelist, poet, author of books on Copernicus, Einstein, science and the origin of man, Jeanne d'Arc, and St. Augustine.
54. Léon-Paul Fargue (1876–1947), French poet; in the 1890s, a Symbolist; later, a Cubist.

55. Gaston Gallimard (1881–1975), publisher of, among others, *La Nouvelle Revue française*.
56. That is, the Princesse di Bassiano.
57. Valéry Larbaud (1881–1957), novelist and man of letters. Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), poet, dramatist, novelist, critic, artist, man of the cinema, member of the Académie-française from 1955. The business of “taking care of Valéry” was resolved at the luncheon meeting called by the Princesse di Bassiano.
58. Lilian, Viscountess Rothermere (d. 1937), wife of the owner of *The Daily Mail*, and other English newspapers, was eager to support a literary review. For three years, she generously subsidized *The Criterion*, a literary periodical of critical essays and reviews founded by T. S. Eliot in 1922, although Lady Rothermere claimed that she had been the journal’s founder. In 1925, the publishing house of Faber & Gwyer relieved her of this financial obligation. She moved permanently to France in the late 1920s. Eliot remained editor of *The Criterion* until its demise in 1939.
59. The Princesse di Bassiano, who cultivated and supported French literati, subsidized the handsome literary review, *Commerce*, co-edited by Paul Valéry, Valéry Larbaud, and Léon-Paul Fargue. Between 1924 and 1932, twenty-nine numbers were published by Adrienne Monnier at her bookshop in the rue de l’Odéon. It printed about a dozen of Valéry’s works. The Princesse later moved to Rome, where she founded the cosmopolitan literary review *Botteghe Oscure*, published until 1963.
60. Valéry was elected to the Académie-française in 1925. George Antheil (1900–1965), American composer and pianist. Though NCB was not especially interested in hosting a musical salon, on several occasions in the 1920s, her Fridays were enlivened by concerts. Ezra Pound convinced her to let Antheil perform at 20, rue Jacob with his percussion instruments. She and Romaine Brooks subsidized the composition of Antheil’s most famous piece, *Ballet mécanique*, scored for player piano, car horns, airplane propellers, and the like. It was performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, 19 June 1926, and later at NCB’s salon. Antheil and his wife Böske lived above Sylvia Beach’s bookshop.
61. The eponymous characters in La Fontaine’s fable “L’Ours et l’Amateur des jardins” (“The Bear and the Lover of Gardens”) (Book VIII,

- fable x) become fast friends. When the bear sees a fly on the gardener's nose, he hits it with a paving stone, killing fly and friend.
62. On Tuesday evenings between 1885 and 1894, poets and other writers—foreign and French, famous and soon-to-be—gathered at Mallarmé's Paris flat (89, rue de Rome) to hear him talk, in a quiet voice, while standing by the fireplace, smoking.
 63. In 1884, Mallarmé bought a small country house overlooking the Seine, in Valvins, near Fontainebleau. The apartment was reached by an exterior stone staircase. After his death there in 1898, Mallarmé was buried in the cemetery in the neighboring village of Samoreau.
 64. Samois-sur-Seine is a short distance north of Fontainebleau.
The quoted phrases in this paragraph are (with slight variations) from poems by Mallarmé. The first two appear in "Les Fenêtres" ("The Windows"), lines 18, 20; the third concludes an untitled poem beginning, "Las de l'amer repos où ma paresse offense" ("Tired of the bitter repose where my indolence offends").
 65. In her reference to the reed, NCB may also have in mind the famous comparison between a reed and a man made by the French scientist and religious philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662): "L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant" ("Man is a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed"); *Pensées*, no. 200 (according to the order established by Louis Lefuma, 1951).

14. *Legends and Anecdotes, Translators and Detractors*

1. André Gide (1869–1951), French novelist, essayist, dramatist, critic; winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947.
2. Léon Pierre-Quint (1895–1958), French critic and author, wrote *André Gide: Sa vie, son oeuvre* (André Gide: His Life, His Work) (1932). NCB is using him to criticize Gide's pederasty, which she detested.
3. Gide's *Corydon*, Socratic discussions on homosexuality, was first published anonymously (1911, 1920), then under his name (1924).
4. In January 1895, Gide found himself in a hotel in Algiers where Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas were also guests. Gide quickly left, for they were now the subject of gossip and Wilde was only

months away from conviction for homosexual practices. Then, ashamed of his behavior toward a friend, Gide returned and, with the pair, explored the forbidden pleasures of the region. Gide retold this important episode in his life in *In Memoriam* (1910) and *Si le grain ne meurt* (If It Die) (Anonymous edition, 1920, 1921; public edition, 1924; offered for sale, 1926). Douglas flirted briefly with Romaine Brooks, NCB's lover; NCB was briefly engaged to Douglas, who, in 1902, married her friend Olive Custance.

5. William Blake (1757–1827), English Romantic poet, artist, and mystic. Gide's translation of Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell—Le Mariage du ciel et de l'enfer*—was published in 1923 (Paris: C. Aveline).
6. Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939), English author, editor of the *Transatlantic Review*. Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864), English poet and essayist. Valéry Larbaud (1881–1957), French novelist and man of letters, who worked on the French translation of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. He lectured on the English author Samuel Butler (1835–1902) on 3 November 1920, at Adrienne Monnier's bookstore, La Maison des amis des livres. His translations of Butler include *Erewhon* (1920); *Ainsi va toute chair* (The Way of All Flesh) (1921); *La Vie et l'habitude* (Life and Habit) (1922); and *Nouveaux voyages en Erewhon* (Erewhon Revisited) (1924).
7. Editions of Keats in French include: *Lettres à Fanny Brawne*, trans. M. L. Des Garets (1912); *Poésies de John Keats* (1907, 1922) and *La Veille de Sainte-Agnes* (The Eve of Saint Agnes) (1913), translated by Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre.
8. The American expatriate Esther Murphy (c. 1898–1962) married and divorced both the British writer and Socialist theoretician John Strachey (1901–63) and Chester A. Arthur III, grandson of the twenty-first President, but, according to Virgil Thomson, she was “a practicing girl herself and a great friend of Natalie's” (quoted in Wickes's *Amazon*: 248; see also 256). Murphy was a champion of the superiority of women and on occasion strode about with a rather large whip. In Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* (1928), she appears as “Bounding Bess,” the woman hunted for branding by Dame Musset and her sect (based on NCB and her circle). It was Esther Murphy's life-long—but unrealized—ambition to write definitive works on Mme de Maintenon (1635–1719), mistress and morganatic

- second wife of Louis XIV, and on Edith Wharton (1862–1937), the American novelist.
9. Edmond Jaloux (1878–1949), French novelist and critic; *Figures étrangères* (Foreign Figures) (1925), collected essays on English writers.
 10. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Scots writer, whose *Heroes and Hero-Worship* appeared in 1841. In his essay on “Boswell’s Life of Johnson,” Carlyle identified as important aspects of hero-worship loyalty, discipleship, reverence, and the need for a strong leader.
 11. The source of his advice is unidentified.
 12. Edmond Jaloux, *Le Boudoir de Proserpine* (Proserpina’s Boudoir) (1910).
 13. Paul Morand (1888–1976), Russian-born French diplomat and novelist, whose impressionistic stories generally concern nightlife in Europe between the wars.
 14. Félicien Rops (1833–1898), Belgian Symbolist artist, whose works include *Les Sataniques* series. Of him J.-K. Huysmans wrote in *Certains*: “He has penetrated Satanism and summarized it in admirable prints which are, as inventions, as symbols, as examples of incisive and vigorous art, truly unique.”
 15. *Clarissa Harlowe* (7 vols., 1747–48), an epistolary novel of over one million words, narrating the heroine’s rape, her death from shame, and the vindication of her honor.
 16. Francis de Miomandre (1880–1959), novelist, essayist, short-story writer. Jean Cassou (b. 1897), writer on Spanish literature and authors, as well as on art topics; conservateur en chef du musée national de l’art moderne.
 17. NCB’s sister Laura (Mme Hippolyte Dreyfus) (1880?–1974) represented the International Council of Women at the League of Nations.
 18. From 1881, Nietzsche spent seven consecutive summers in the small Swiss village of Sils-Maria, in the Engadine. He lodged in the home of a Mr. Durisch, who often sat on Nietzsche’s bed and conversed with him. Here, Nietzsche jotted down his first notes for *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.
 19. Oscar Venceslas de Milosz (1877–1939), Lithuanian-born poet, who served as his country’s Resident Minister in Paris from 1919 to 1928. NCB, a close friend, had a bust of him in her salon.

15. *An Academy of Women: Foreword*

1. NCB's "Académie des Femmes," where women writers mingled and gave readings from their works, was a counterpart (and perhaps a reproach) to the Académie-française, from which women were then excluded. Her friend the Belgian-born novelist Marguerite Yourcenar (1903–1987) became the first woman admitted to the Académie-française, in 1980.
2. NCB's phrase recalls the title of Edmond Jaloux's collected essays, *Figures étrangères* (Foreign Figures) (1925).
3. *Eparpillements* (Scatterings) (1910) was the first of three volumes of epigrams in which NCB commented wittily and pointedly on the human comedy.
4. Stendhal was thin skinned and had an inferiority complex.
5. La Rochefoucauld held that self-love inspired all social transactions.
6. Golconda, ancient kingdom and city in India, conquered in 1687 by Aurangzeb (1618–1707). The name is emblematic of great wealth, and the city is proverbially famous for its diamonds (although the gems were only cut and polished there).
7. NCB, *Pensées d'une amazone* (Thoughts of an Amazon): 18 and 131, respectively.
8. NCB, *Pensées d'une amazone*: 132.
9. NCB, *Pensées d'une amazone*: 11, 185 (twice), and 135, respectively.
10. NCB, *Pensées d'une amazone*: 135 and 140, respectively.
11. Léon Daudet (1868–1942), son of the novelist Alphonse Daudet (1840–1897); *L'Hérédo; essai sur le drame intérieur* (The Congenital Syphilitic; Essay on Inner Tragedy) (1916) dealt with heredity and personality.
12. Aurel, pseudonym of Mme Antoinette Gabrielle Mortier de Faucamberge (1882–1948), the subject of a later chapter in *Adventures*. The portrait of NCB had originally appeared in March 1925 in *Le Monde Nouveau*.
13. When NCB was about ten years old, her father took her and her sister Laura to Europe for more formal schooling.
14. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (1880–1945), French poetess and prose-writer, the subject of the following chapter in *Adventures*.

16. *Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, President*

1. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (1880–1945), French poet and prose writer, wife of Dr. J.-C. Mardrus, translator of the *Arabian Nights*. Her poems often evoke the land- and seascapes of her native Normandy; she was born in Honfleur, which lies at the mouth of the Seine. She and her husband met NCB in 1902, and NCB visited them often at their villa by the Seine outside Paris. Lucie and NCB went walking or riding along the river, Lucie dressed as a cowboy with a ten-gallon hat, NCB in a more conventional riding habit. NCB also visited the Mardruses at their summer home in Normandy. For a time, Lucie replaced Renée Vivien in NCB's affections; their love affair gave way to a lifelong attachment. In 1930, Lucie published a novel entitled *L'Ange et les pervers* (The Angel and the Pervers), in which she based the character of Laurette Wells—American-born, French-educated—on NCB; hers is the most revealing, the most convincing of the many written portraits of NCB.
2. Jean Dars, winner of the Prix Sully Prudhomme (1924) for his collection of poems *Fièvres* (Fevers) (1920–22).
3. Philippe Crouzet (1899–1929); his *Théâtre aux enfants* (Childrens Theatre) was posthumously published in 1934.
4. Dr. Mardrus tolerated his wife's relationship with NCB for two years, but, having completed his sixteen-volume translation of the *Arabian Nights* (1898–1904), he grew restless and wanted to return to North Africa. In 1904, he and his wife embarked on a series of journeys that gave her new subjects for her poetry. It may be this absence from Paris to which NCB refers here.
5. From Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, "Poème liminaire" ("Prefatory Poem"), in *La Figure de proue* (The Figurehead) (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1908): 5–6.
6. The source of these two lines is unidentified.
7. Pierre Choderlos de Laclos (1741–1803), *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (Dangerous Liaisons) (1782), an epistolary novel, distinguished by its psychological analysis and vivid descriptions, about a professional seducer and his victims in the upper strata of society.
8. NCB probably refers to the book by the founder of social psychology, Dr. Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), *Psychologie des foules* (1895), which was translated into English as *The Crowd. A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896) and as *The Psychology of Peoples* (1898).

9. *Six Poems*: "Ulalume," "The Raven," "The Sleeper," "To Helen," "The City in the Sea," "Lenore" (1922).
10. Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, trans., *Choix de poèmes, derniers vers inédits, traductions* (de E. Poe, Emily Brontë, Edna Saint Vincent Millay, Anna Wickham) (Selected Poems, Last Unpublished Verse, Translations) (1951).

17. *English Bohemian Life and Anna Wickham*

1. The poet Anna Wickham (1884–1947), born in Wimbledon, Surrey, was taken at the age of six to Australia. At twenty-one, she returned to England to study opera with Jean de Reszke, only to abandon her career as a singer when she married Patrick Hepburn. She wrote some nine hundred poems in praise and condemnation of domesticity, her verses being variously quiet, restive, passionate, and bitter. In his first-hand account of Anna Wickham's "Friday" at NCB's in 1927, Harold Acton described the guest of honor—whom NCB termed the English Verlaine—as a "burly" figure fortified in advance with garlic and wine and enthusiastically congratulated afterwards, while the American writer Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941) went virtually unnoticed in the audience. Anderson later told Gertrude Stein that Wickham was "just a derailed freight car" (Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (1948): 183–84).
2. In the seventeenth century, the Cheshire Cheese, in Wine Office Court, just off Fleet Street, was the regular meeting place of Dr. Samuel Johnson and his circle, including James Boswell and Oliver Goldsmith. In the 1890s, a room on the second floor was frequented by the Rhymers Club, which numbered among its members William Butler Yeats, Arthur Symons, and Ernest Dowson.
3. London's Mermaid Tavern, in Bread Street, Cheapside, was a popular rendezvous for such seventeenth-century lights as Ben Jonson, Sir Walter Raleigh, and, in all probability, Shakespeare. The British Romantic poet John Keats (1795–1821) wrote "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern" in early 1818. He did not meet his "beloved," Fanny Brawne (1800–1865), until August–September 1818. On 25 December, they made an avowal of love. Keats died on 23 February 1821.
4. Verlaine died after a life in which periods of alcoholism alternated with periods of repentance and religion. Charles Algernon Swin-

- burne (1837–1909), English poet, one-time sadomasochist, and semi-alcoholic. Although NCB spells the name *Condor*, she probably means Charles Conder (1868–1909), an English artist who lived in Australia; once, when drunk on absinthe, he bared his arm and into the muscle plunged a pin up to the head, repeating the performance on his leg, without evidencing the slightest concern. Oscar Wilde commented, “How interested Baudelaire would have been.”
5. Maenads (also, Bacchae or Bacchantes), female attendants on Bacchus (Dionysus), god of wine and fertility. Their name, from a Greek verb meaning “to rave,” describes their extravagant gestures and frenzied rites. In mythology, as the musician Orpheus wandered through Thrace singing of his lost love Eurydice, Maenads tore him to pieces.
 6. The lines in question probably came from Wickham’s poem “Artificiality” (in her collection *The Contemplative Quarry*, 1915), beginning “Poor body that was crushed in stays, / Through many real-seeing days.”
 7. Croydon, about ten miles from London, would seem to be Wickham’s symbol for all that is middle class.
 8. The Nineteenth Amendment (1920) gave the vote to American women. Universal suffrage in England dates from 1928. French women only got the vote in 1944–45.
 9. According to popular myth, the pelican feeds its young with blood from its own breast (thus, in Christian art, it is a symbol for Christ). In Greek legend, Philomela (literally, “lover of song”) was changed into a nightingale; in classical times poems were occasionally called “nightingales.”
 10. Wickham, *The Contemplative Quarry* (1915), *The Man with a Hammer* (1916, 1919), *The Little Old House* (1921).
 11. Wickham, “Envoi,” in *The Man with a Hammer*.
 12. Wickham, “The Walk,” in *The Man with a Hammer*.
 13. The first four lines of the opening and closing stanzas of Wickham, “Nervous Prostration,” in *The Man with a Hammer*.
 14. Wickham, “Definition,” in *The Man with a Hammer*. In the original poem, the last stanza (only partially translated in NCB’s text) runs thus:

There is a Virgin-Mother, shrined in Christianity,
 There is a virgin wife in faiths to be,
 For the constructive form-inducing principle for life,

Is she unknown, unnamed God's wife,
 Who out of crystal-bearing water drew the higher ape:—
 She might give even Socialism shape!

15. Abel Doysié (b. 1886), poet and translator. "The Fresh Start," in *The Man with a Hammer*.
16. Wickham, "The Contrast," in *The Man with a Hammer*; the closing couplet of this quatrain-poem runs: "And she was very tender, very kind—/ She was most after God's mind."
17. Wickham, "Traducers," in *The Man with a Hammer*; the couplet constitutes the poem.
18. This is a literal translation of the poem, as a published text has not been found.

Sappho is said to have thrown herself into the sea from the Leucadian promontory after her advances had been rejected by Phaon, the handsome boatman from Lesbos, for whom she conceived a hopeless passion in middle age. Clais (or Cleis) was Sappho's daughter.

19. An example of Blake's rhymed sentences appears in the "Proverbs of Hell": "Prayers plow not! Praises reap not! / Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!" André Gide translated the work as *Le mariage du ciel et de l'enfer* (Paris: C. Aveline, 1923).

18. Colette

1. Colette (1873–1954), French novelist and sometime actress, born Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette in Burgundy. With her first husband, the novelist and music critic Henry Gauthier-Villars (1859–1931), she collaborated on a series of books about Claudine, which were published under his pen-name, "Willy." After their divorce in 1906, she became a music-hall entertainer to support herself. She continued to write, under the name Colette Willy; from 1916, she signed her work simply Colette. Her numerous novels—among them *Chéri* (1920), *La Chatte* (The Cat) (1933), and *Gigi* (1945)—are distinguished by their sensitive observations of women, nature, and eroticism. Her marriage, in 1912, to the editor of *Le Matin* Baron Henry [*sic*] de Jouvenel ("Sidi") (1876–1935), ended in divorce in 1925. She married Maurice Goudekot (1889–1977), a dealer of pearls, in 1935. She was the first woman to be President of the

literary society, Académie Goncourt, and the first Frenchwoman to be given a state funeral.

NCB met Colette at the turn of the century, made a brief appearance as “Miss Flossie” in *Claudine s'en va* (Claudine Goes Away) (1903), and became a friend for life after her divorce from Willy.

2. In 1922, Colette adapted her autobiographical novel *La Vagabonde* (1911) for the stage. The character of Renée Nérée, a writer turned touring music-hall actress, is clearly Colette, while Taillandier, the ex-husband, is Willy. The play premièred early in 1923, at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, Paris, but only after its presentation in 1922 in NCB's salon. It was again scheduled for production in the rue Jacob at NCB's “Friday” in honor of Colette on 14 January 1927.
3. From time to time the couturier Paul Poiret (1880–1944) took to the stage. Late in 1926, for example, he appeared with Colette in *La Vagabonde* in Monte Carlo. Marguerite Moreno (1871–1948) was a popular French actress who enjoyed a major success in the title role of Giraudoux's play, *The Madwoman of Chaillot*; for more than fifty years from the mid-1890s, she was Colette's closest friend.
4. Alexandre Dumas père (1802–1870), French novelist and playwright (*The Three Musketeers*, 1844, and *The Count of Monte-Cristo*, 1845, among many other titles), grandson of a marquis and a negress, with whom the grandfather lived for some twelve years in San Domingo. His illegitimate son Alexandre Dumas fils (1824–1895) was the author of *La Dame aux Camélias* (Lady of the Camélias) (1848).
5. Blue was Colette's favorite color; she wrote on blue paper and a lamp with a shade made from this paper (her *fanal bleu* or blue lantern) hung by her divan.
6. Nonoche, one of Colette's cats (mother of Bijou) during her childhood in the Burgundian village of Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye. The cats figure in Colette's recollections of her youth, *Sido* and *La Maison de Claudine* (Claudine's House), written in the 1920s. Later, she might have no fewer than ten cats living with her.
7. Colette's father, Captain Jules-Joseph Colette (1829–1905), lost his left leg at the battle of Metegnano (1859); two weeks later, he was awarded the red ribbon of the Légion d'honneur. Colette was made an officer of the Légion d'honneur in 1928.
8. In the 1902 dramatization of *Claudine à Paris* (Claudine in Paris)

- (1901), appears the character of Maugis, a music critic invented by Willy as a self-parody and disclaimed by Colette (in *Mes apprentissages*) (My Apprenticeships) as “lover of women and foreign drinks.”
9. The French dramatist, poet, and diplomat Paul Claudel (1868–1955) was converted to Catholicism after a sudden mystical experience in 1886, and his writings reflect his profound faith.
 10. On 3 July 1913, Colette gave birth to her only child, her daughter Colette de Jouvenel, known—as she herself had been known—as Bel-Gazou; the name is a form of *beau gazouillis*, “beautiful language.” The source of the quote is unidentified.
 11. *La Naissance du jour* (1928; English translation, *Morning Glory*, 1931) evokes and celebrates Colette’s life in the south of France, particularly around her cottage in Saint-Tropez named “La Treille muscate.”
 12. *Le Voyage égoïste* (1922; English translation, *Journey for Myself*, 1971) contains Colette’s unpublished writings from 1912–13, with their recollections of her youth in Saint-Sauveur. The volume includes some of her most delightful descriptions of nature.

19. *Rachilde*

1. Rachilde, pseudonym of Mme Alfred Valette, née Marguerite Eymery (1860–1953), literary critic and author of some sixty novels, considered daring in their day, such as *Monsieur Vénus*. In her youth she often donned male attire, leading some to call her “Monsieur Rachilde” or, thanks to Maurice Barrès, “Mlle Baudelaire.” When so dressed she carried a visiting card that read “Rachilde, homme de lettres” (“Rachilde, Man of Letters”). With her husband she founded *Le Mercure de France* (1890–1965), one of the best-known literary and artistic monthlies; at first associated in part with the Symbolist movement, it also published original work by authors from all schools and nationalities. On Tuesdays at her home in the rue de Condé, near the Luxembourg Gardens, Rachilde gathered about her men and women from the worlds of literature and art. She was honored (along with Djuna Barnes) at NCB’s “Friday” of 3 June 1927.
2. Her veil was perhaps the color of the backgrounds in paintings—a deep, vague blue.
3. Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907), French novelist of Dutch de-

scent, who, for thirty years (until 1898), also worked in the Direction de la Sûreté Générale. His novel *A rebours* (Against Nature) (1884) is often cited as the supreme expression of decadence, while *Là-bas* (Down There) (1891) deals with Satanism. “*Fin de siècle*” (“end of century”) has come to imply “decadence,” with particular reference to the end of the nineteenth century.

4. Montmartre, a district in north Paris, and Montparnasse, south of the Seine, were known for their artists, cabaret life, and bohemian and avant-garde associations. Rachilde would seem to be referring to sidewalk painters who sell their works on the spot, like newsboys or vegetable cart pushers.
5. *Comoedia*, a periodical devoted to the arts. NCB and her salon in the rue Jacob would seem to be the inspiration for this piece.

20. Aurel: *Festival in Return*

1. Aurel, pseudonym of the writer Mme Antoinette Gabrielle Mortier de Faucamberge (1882–1948), was the wife of the scholar and poet Alfred Mortier (1865–1937). In her Thursday salons at 20, rue du Printemps, she welcomed writers, especially younger ones, whose careers she encouraged. She was proud of her Greek medallion profile. As a member of NCB’s Académie des Femmes, Aurel was the guest of honor at the “Friday” of 7 June 1927.
2. The “warrior” is unidentified.
3. In 1921, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus published *Aurel et le procès des mondains* (Aurel and the Trial of Society).
4. For Aurel’s use of this quote see the chapter, “An Academy of Women” in *Adventures*.
5. The Countess de Sottocasa is unidentified.
6. Jean Dolent, pseudonym of Antoine Fournier (1835–1909), author of novels and art manuals. Aurel wrote two books about him: an appreciation, *Jean Dolent* (1910) and *Jean Dolent et la femme* (Jean Dolent and Womankind) (1911).
7. For Aurel, Rodin was the artist of the “new woman,” and, in 1919, she wrote *Rodin devant la femme. Fragments inédits de Rodin. Sa technique par lui-même* (Rodin Facing Womankind. Unpublished Fragments by Rodin. His own Comments on her Technique).

NCB’s reference to “l’éternel féminin” recalls the closing line of Goethe’s *Faust* (Part II): “The Eternal Feminine draws us on.”

8. *La Phalange* (1906–1914), a literary review that continued the traditions of Symbolism, even as it sponsored new writers. Contributors included Apollinaire, Francis Jammes, and Francis Vielé-Griffin. In his “*lettre intime*” of 16 May 1912 to NCB, Remy de Gourmont enclosed a newspaper clipping from *l’Intransigeant* (May 1912) promising that “the next issue of *La Phalange*” would be “the scene of single and singular combat between two Amazons of letters.” One, NCB, would defend the schools of Lesbos; the other, Mme Aurel, would defend outraged morality.

21. *Mina Loy*

1. Mina Loy (originally Lowy) (1882–1966), English-born poet and painter, whose major collection of verse, *Lunar Baedeker*, was published by Robert McAlmon’s Contact Press in 1923. (Quotations in the text and notes are from Loy, *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover [Highlands, N.C.: The Jargon Society, 1982]). Other of her poems, plays, manifestoes, and drawings appeared in various little magazines and journals from 1914. A modernist poet, she used free forms, unpunctuated lines, and techniques of the Cubists and Futurists. An analysis of female sexuality distinguishes her work.

In 1903, she married the English painter Stephen Haweis (1878–c. 1968), from whom she was divorced in 1917. The following January, she wedded Arthur Cravan (née Fabian Avenarius Lloyd), boxer, poet, publisher, and nephew of Oscar Wilde, who disappeared in October 1918, at the age of thirty-one. After sojourns in Paris, Florence, and New York, Mina Loy settled in Paris in 1923, where she made lamp shades to support herself and her two daughters, whom Sylvia Beach described as “three raving beauties” (*Shakespeare and Company*: 113–14).

On 4 February 1927, she delivered an informal lecture on Gertrude Stein at NCB’s “Friday” devoted to the American writer. On 6 May, Loy read from her own works at the “Friday” held for her and the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre.

In 1936, she moved to the United States, living for seventeen years in New York, and, from 1953 until her death, in Aspen, Colorado.

2. “Apology of Genius” was originally printed in *Dial* LXXIII (1922):

73–74, then in *Lunar Baedeker*. McAlmon (1896–1956) was probably responsible for the misspelling of *Baedeker*.

In 1839, Karl Baedeker (1801–1859) published the first of his famous series of thorough, reliable guidebooks; he also inaugurated the practice of marking objects and places of interest with one or more stars, according to their historic or aesthetic importance.

3. After unsuccessfully searching for her husband in Europe and America, Loy eventually learned from the U.S. State Department that Cravan's body had been found beaten and robbed in the Mexican desert. She eulogized her love in the poem "The Widow's Jazz" (*Pagany* II [1931]: 68–70); the lines that NCB misquotes read: "Husband / how secretly you cuckold me with death."
4. NCB's word *somnambule* perhaps alludes to Loy's poem "Lunar Baedeker," whose second stanza runs: "To some somnambulists / of adolescent thighs / draped / in satirical draperies."
5. Loy appeared under the name Patience Scalpel in Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* (1928; New York: Harper and Row, 1972), a satire on NCB (Dame Musset) and her circle. In the line she here quotes in English, NCB seems to paraphrase the opening of the *Almanack's* "May" section, which celebrates Patience's "divine and ethereal Voice," "the Voice of one whose Ankles are nibbled by the Cherubs" (p. 30).
6. In classical mythology there were three snake-haired Gorgons: Medusa (their chief), Stheno, and Euryale. Medusa's glance (or, in some versions, that of any Gorgon) could turn a person to stone.
7. As a mathematical concept, the fourth dimension is a hypothetical dimension, whose relation to the recognized three (of length, breadth, and thickness) is analogous to their relations with each other. Einstein, in 1921, introduced time as the fourth dimension in his theory of relativity. The expression is also used to describe something beyond the limits of normal experience.

22. *Elisabeth de Gramont*

1. Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre, known familiarly as Lily (1875–1954), was descended from Henri IV, but preferred the aristocracy of merit to that of birth. NCB met her through the Mardruses in 1910, and for a number of years they were lovers; their friendship lasted nearly half a century, until the

duchesse's death. During World War I, NCB went often to Lily's home, with its bomb shelter; the Duc and Duchesse lived at 67 and 69, rue Raynouard, where the gardens sloped down to the Seine. After her separation and eventual divorce (1920), the duchesse became a writer.

2. In the passage devoted to tea, NCB used the phrase *trait d'union* ("hyphen"); the expression recalls a house she and Romaine Brooks built near Beauvallon and named the Villa Trait d'Union, the "hyphenated villa," because it was really two separate houses joined by a common dining room. Each woman could then lead her own life and meet the other only at meals. NCB had used a similar arrangement at Neuilly and on Lesbos. She and Romaine lived in Beauvallon for part of the year from the late twenties through the thirties.
3. A reference to Elisabeth de Gramont's book on food, *Almanach des bonnes choses de France* (Almanac of Good Things of France) (1920), dedicated to NCB and her figurative ancestor, the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 B.C.), in which she quotes NCB, Renée Vivien, and others.
4. *Caille* (Quail), *Nefle* (Medlar), and "autumn sherbet" refer to portions of the *Almanac*. The duchesse maintains, for example, that quails are quite immoral and will marry anyone. She discourses on the varieties of food with wit and erudition.

Francis Jammes (1868–1938), French writer and novelist. His conversion to Roman Catholicism took on the aspect of a literary event.

5. A reference to *Robert de Montesquiou et Marcel Proust* (1925). Montesquiou (1855–1921), a French count descended from an ancient French family, introduced NCB to the most brilliant Parisian society. She remained loyal to him in later years, when most of his friends had deserted him, and he left her a Persian tapestry which she hung on a wall in her dining room. He wrote precious and elaborately symbolic poetry, essays, and memoirs.
6. Montesquiou's luxurious habits and his homosexuality underlie similar traits in Proust's character, Palamede de Guermantes, Baron de Charlus ("Mémé" to his intimates) in *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Remembrance of Things Past). He serves as the author's chief vehicle for a detailed, compassionate treatment of the theme of inversion. Montesquiou was also a model for Des Esseintes

- in J.-K. Huysmans's decadent novel *A Rebours* (Against Nature) (1884).
7. NCB errs slightly in the title of the duchesse's book *Histoire de Samuel Bernard et de ses enfants* (History of Samuel Bernard and his Children) (1914), about the Comte de Coubert (1651–1739) and his children.
 8. Elisabeth de Gramont, *Mémoires*, 4 vols. (Paris: Grasset, 1928–35).
 9. The French phrase reads *miroir aux alouettes* ("mirror for larks"), a device using small mirrors to reflect sunlight in order to attract birds.
 10. Henri IV (1553–1610), the first of the Bourbon kings of France (from 1589), assassinated by Ravaillac; he was a man of great and supple intelligence, and a lover (he was known as "*le vert gallant*," or a "lady's man").
 11. The Peninsula of Finistère ("Land's End") is in Brittany; views are wild and grand, the area rich in pilgrimage churches and megalithic monuments, notably dolmens and mehnirs.
 12. A reference to the rows of prehistoric stones.

23. *Djuna Barnes*

1. Djuna Barnes (1892–1982), New York-born novelist, dramatist, poet, short-story writer, and artist. Her prose is often Gothic and obscure, treating of frustrated lesbian passions. From 1914 to 1919, she lived in Greenwich Village, writing poetry, prose, and plays (including pieces for the Provincetown Theatre, where she mixed with Eugene O'Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay). Her first work, *The Book of Repulsive Women*, a collection of eight lesbian poems and drawings, was published when Barnes was twenty-three. By 1920, she was an expatriate writer in Paris, where her profession and striking beauty brought her into contact with other writers and artists; she was recognized as the most talented of all the Americans there. A *Book*—poems, stories, plays, and drawings—appeared in 1923. Ford Madox Ford "discovered" her and introduced her to NCB who, in turn, adopted Barnes as a special friend and inducted her into the Académie des Femmes; she shared her "Friday," 3 June 1927, with Rachilde. Barnes's privately printed roman à clef, *Ladies Almanack* (1928) is based on NCB's lesbian circle, with the

hostess thinly disguised as “Evangeline Musset.” In *Nightwood* (1936), her masterpiece, a novel marked by a sense of horror and decay, she wrote of her tempestuous love (1922–1931) for the sculptress Thelma Wood (1901–1970), earlier, the lover of Millay. Wood was the prototype for *Nightwood’s* Robin Vote; she is also the “T. W.” to whom Barnes dedicated the novel *Ryder* (1928). World War II forced Barnes to return to America, where she spent the last four decades of her long life alone in a one-room apartment in Greenwich Village, repelling visitors, laboring over *The Antiphon* (1958), a blank-verse drama difficult even for T. S. Eliot to follow, and filling a laundry basket with manuscript scraps.

2. In 1913, the Orientalist Dr. J.-C. Mardrus published a French paraphrase of portions of the Old Testament, including the Books of Genesis and Ruth. Ruth was Naomi’s Moabite daughter-in-law; when both women were widowed, Ruth out of love stayed by Naomi’s side, adopting her Jewish people and her God. Ruth later wedded Naomi’s kinsman, Booz. “The Friendship of Women,” Renée Vivien’s short story in *La dame à la louve* (The Woman of the Wolf) (1904) celebrates the rapport between Naomi and Ruth.
3. Ford Madox Ford (born Ford Madox Hueffer) (1873–1939), English author and editor of *Transatlantic Review* (1923–24), whose contributors included Barnes, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, John Dos Passos, and William Carlos Williams. From 1926, he divided his time between America and France.
4. Nancy Cunard (1896–1965), heir to the Cunard Line millions, striking in appearance and flamboyantly independent, was sexually attractive to men and women and was herself attracted to both sexes. At the urging of Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and George Moore, she began to write poems; her first collection, appropriately titled *Outlaws*, came out in 1921. In 1928, she founded the Hours Press, which printed, among other works, Samuel Beckett’s poem “Whoroscope” (1930), his first independently published piece.
5. “Aller et Retour,” *Transatlantic Review* 1, no. 4 (April 1924): 159–67; NCB quotes from 163–66, her omissions here signaled with ellipses.
6. The phrase recalls Oscar Wilde’s *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*: “The poor dead woman whom he loved, / And murdered in her bed” (lines 5–6).
7. Barnes’s short story “The Passion” actually appeared in the *Trans-*

atlantic Review 2 (1924): 490–96. It is assumed that the Princess Frederica Rholinghausen is the one passion of the widower and Polish officer Kurt Anders, who visits her for thirty years, but, as Barnes deftly puts it, “All of this was nonsense.” The work later became the final story in *Spillway* (1962).

8. Barnes, an accomplished equestrian from her Cornwall-on-Hudson and Long Island farm days, evokes the animal in her stories “A Night Among the Horses” and “No-Man’s-Mare”; it is appropriate that the Amazon should note and comment on this aspect of Barnes’s appearance. Edgar Degas (1834–1917), French artist famous for his paintings of race-track scenes and his sculptures of horses as well as of ballerinas.
9. “Paradise,” from *A Book*: 131. The lines allude to the cock crows following Peter’s denial of Christ after His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was identified and betrayed by the kiss of Judas Iscariot.
10. “Finis,” from *A Book*: 220.
11. “Fragment of a Portrait,” from “Antique,” in *A Book*: 103.
12. Barnes’s novel *Ryder* (1928), a bawdy mock-Elizabethan chronicle of the Barnes family, tells, in a stream-of-consciousness style, a man’s relations with his mother, his wife, and his mistress.
13. In her novel *Clélie* (1654–60), Mlle Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701) included “La Carte du Tendre” (“The Map of Affections”), an allegorical map composed in her salon showing routes through the pastoral regions of the tender sentiments.

24. Gertrude Stein

1. From 1904 until her death, the American writer Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) resided mainly in Paris. Her lover, companion, and amanuensis was Alice B. Toklas (1877–1967), whom she met in 1907, and with whom she lived from 1910. Physical opposites, Gertrude was heavy, Alice slender; NCB once remarked of them, “I am afraid the ‘bigger one’ who gets fatter and fatter will devour her [Toklas]. She looks so thin” (quoted in Wiser, *The Crazy Years*, 1983: 188). During the 1920s Stein led a cultural salon in her apartment at 27, rue de Fleurus, acting as a patron for such artists as Picasso and Matisse (whose works hung on her walls along with those by such other exponents of modern art as Cezanne, Renoir,

and Bonnard), and influencing writers like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Sherwood Anderson. Her own innovative writing emphasized the sounds and rhythms rather than the sense of words. Among her works are short stories (such as *Three Lives*, 1909), Cubist prose (*Tender Buttons*, 1914), a long narrative (*The Making of Americans*, 1925), autobiography (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 1933), critical essays (including *How to Write*, 1931, and *Lectures in America*, 1935), plays (among them, *The Mother of Us All*, 1946), and opera (notably, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, 1934, with music by the American composer Virgil Thomson [1896–1989]).

The friendship between Stein and NCB began only in 1926, but gradually deepened as they visited back and forth, introduced friends to one another, and took evening walks together, especially after 1937, when Stein and Toklas moved to 5, rue Christine, a few blocks away from the rue Jacob.

Stein's "Friday" was held on 4 February 1927, the day after her fifty-third birthday; it included a performance by Thomson who sang his settings of the Stein pieces "Susie Asado" and "Preciosilla."

2. Marie Laurencin (1885–1956), French painter and printmaker. Illegitimate, she never knew her father. Her mother, of Creole stock, possessed elegant taste and a strong character. Laurencin began to paint as a child, encouraged by her mother to practice drawing braids; however, the woman had little faith in her daughter's abilities and regularly burned her attempts at art. From 1904 to 1912, Laurencin was Apollinaire's mistress.
3. During World War I, Stein and Toklas worked for the American Fund for French Wounded, distributing supplies to hospitals in Perpignan, Nîmes, and, after the War, Alsace. Through it all, Stein drove a Ford van christened "Auntie" after her Aunt Pauline who, like the vehicle, behaved "admirably in emergencies" and "fairly well most times," if properly flattered. In December 1920, she retired "Auntie" and bought a new Ford, a two-seater that, because it was stripped of all accessories and trim, she named "Godiva."
4. NCB's reference to the Orient could allude to Stein's sense of formality, structure, protocol. She studied medicine at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore for four years from 1897; born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, she moved with her family to East Oakland, California, in 1880. Toklas moved to Paris from San Francisco, California.
5. Loy paid tribute to her fellow poet in "Gertrude Stein," a two-part

article in the *Transatlantic Review* 2 (1924): 305–09, 427–30, that opens with this epigraph:

Curie
of the laboratory
of vocabulary
 she crushed
the tonnage
of consciousness
congealed to phrases
 to extract
a radium of the word

6. Stein's book *The Making of Americans* (Paris, 1925) ran to 925 pages; the abridged first American edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934) contained 416 pages.
7. From D. H. Lawrence, "The Evening Land," lines 35–36, in "Unrhyming Poems" (1928).
8. Stein, *The Making of Americans* (New York ed.): 19–20.
9. Stein, *The Making of Americans*: 14–15. The first edition of Joyce's novel *Ulysses* was 732 pages long and weighed two pounds, four ounces; it was published in Paris in 1922, by Sylvia Beach (1887–1962), the American-born proprietress of the English-language bookstore Shakespeare and Company.
10. Stein first met Jean Cocteau through Picasso in 1917; Dame Edith Sitwell (1887–1964), English poet and critic, prompted Cambridge University to invite Stein to give her first lecture in England, an offer Stein declined, then accepted, and finally postponed. A second invitation to lecture in England, at Oxford, was extended by Harold Acton (b. 1904), president of the "Ordinary," the University's literary society. Stein accepted and, in early June 1926, spoke first at Trinity College, Cambridge, then at Christ Church College, Oxford. Her talk, "Composition as Explanation," which she claimed to have written in a garage while waiting for her Ford to be repaired, was uncharacteristically intelligible.
11. Mme Jean-Paul Langlois, née Louise Philibert (1856–1939), widow of a professor of physiology, was for some thirteen years a friend and supporter of Virgil Thomson. She had the idea to translate Stein into French and, with Thomson's assistance, worked out the piece "Water Pipe" (as "Conduite d'Eau"), which had originally appeared in the first issue of the literary review *l'arus the celestial*

visitor (February 1927), edited by the American poet (John Joseph) Sherry Mangan (1904–1961); the complete English version of “Water Pipe” appears in Stein, *Reflection on the Atom Bomb in Previously Uncollected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, ed. Robert Bartlett Haas (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1973), 1: 31–33. The translation was read at NCB’s “Friday” for Stein, which Mme Langlois attended.

12. *Morceaux Choisis de La Fabrication des Américains* (1929) had been begun by the French poet and publisher of Éditions de la Montagne Georges Hugnet (1906–1974), working first with Virgil Thomson, then with Stein. The Surrealist poet Pierre de Massot (1900–1969) supplied a preface and the French Neo-Romantic painter Christian Bérard—Bébé—(1902–1949) provided a portrait.
13. Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), Danish writer of fairy tales.
14. Samson, judge of Israel, was captured and blinded by the Philistines with the help of Delilah, who cut off his hair, the source of his strength. When his locks grew out, he was strong enough to pull down the Philistine temple, killing himself and his captors; see Judges 13–16.
15. Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*, roughly based on Homer’s epic *The Odyssey*, narrates the experiences of the Jewish advertisement canvasser Leopold Bloom, his wife Molly, Stephen Dedalus, and other Dubliners, on 16 June 1904.
16. Larbaud, Joyce’s choice for his translator, agreed to translate portions of *Ulysses* and to summarize the rest, but the pressure of other projects forced him to abandon his plans. Auguste Morel, a young Breton poet, assumed the task, assisted by the Englishman Stuart Gilbert, a former judge in Burma. *Ulysses* was published in French, in 1924, by Sylvia Beach’s friend Adrienne Monnier (1892–1955) of La Maison des amis des livres.
17. *Finnegans Wake* (1939) was the final title of Joyce’s last effort, known as “Work in Progress” since the publication of its first fragment in the April 1924 number of *Transatlantic Review* (Paris). Between 1927 and 1938, seventeen installments of “Work in Progress” were printed in Paris in *transition*.

In 1904, Joyce moved to the Continent, supporting his family chiefly as a language teacher at Berlitz schools in Trieste and Zurich.

18. Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was first

published serially in *The Egoist* (1914–15); thereafter, it was turned down by every London publisher to whom it was offered because of its direct, realistic, and intellectual content. It was finally printed in book form in New York by B. W. Huebsch and Company in 1916.

19. Joyce's play *Exiles* was published in 1918. Eager to have it performed in Paris, he asked NCB, among other acquaintances, including Sylvia Beach, for help in persuading Aurélien-François Lugué-Poë (1869–1940) to stage it at his Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. In a letter to NCB dated 6 September 1920, Joyce inquired if she had had a reply from the director and he thanked her for her "kind intervention." In July 1921, after months of vacillation and demands for revisions, Lugué-Poë rejected the script, fearful of losing money on it. *Exiles* had its première at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York, in 1925, but was not seen in Paris until 1954.
20. Remy de Gourmont's *La Culture des idées* (The Cultivation of Ideas) (1901) contains an essay on the "Dissociation des idées" (The Dissociation of Ideas), in which the author asserts the need to get away from the unquestioning acceptance of ideas and associations of ideas which have become commonplaces, and for thought to proceed by imagery rather than by ideas.

Rimbaud's sonnet entitled "Voyelles" ("Vowels")—beginning "A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles" ("A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels")—was written in 1871, though not published until 1884, in the chapter on Rimbaud in Verlaine's study *Les Poètes maudits* (The Cursed Poets). The sonnet was used to illustrate the Symbolist doctrine of correspondences, the symbolic relations of scent, sound, and color.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), Italian poet, novelist, critic, and founder of Futurism (1909); his "New Futurist Manifesto," subtitled "Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty," proclaimed the end of syntax, sentence construction, adjectives, punctuation, and "mannerism or preciousness of style"; the reader was to be stirred by "a confused medley of sensations and impressions" hurled at his or her head. The title of Stein's poem "Mary Nettie" (1917) is apparently a punning reference to the Futurist's name.

Surrealism, a literary and art movement founded in Paris in 1924 by the poet André Breton (1896–1966), was dedicated to expressing the imagination as revealed in dreams, free of the con-

scious control of reason and convention; it can be traced back to French poets such as Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Apollinaire.

21. Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914), a collection of prose poems that recreate in the Cubist mode "Objects," "Food," and "Rooms." For example, in its entirety the poem "Dining" reads "Dining is west." *Bouton*, the French for *button*, is argot for clitoris.

25. *Romaine Brooks: The Case of a Great Painter of the Human Face*

1. The American painter Romaine Brooks, née Beatrice Romaine Goddard (1874–1970), was born in Rome where her mother was traveling. After Mrs. Goddard died in 1902, leaving her daughter a fortune, Romaine returned to the artists' colony on Capri, where she had lived and painted at the turn of the century. There she met and married the English homosexual poet John Ellingham Brooks (c. 1859–1929), who in the 1890s, had been the first lover of the writer W. Somerset Maugham (1874–1965); Maugham was, as they reminded each other, her oldest friend, and NCB always invited him to her parties. The Brooks's marriage lasted barely one year (1903–04), though Romaine supported him until his death. She subsequently moved to Paris.

Brooks had several brief encounters with men and women, notably Lord Alfred Douglas, Princesse Edmond de Polignac (née Winnaretta Singer, the sewing-machine heiress), Gabriele d'Annunzio, and Ida Rubinstein, a star in Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. In 1915, at a party given by Lady Anglesey ("Aunt Minnie"), she met NCB, although she had heard much about her compatriot from Renée Vivien. Despite NCB's repeated infidelities and Romaine's recriminations, their love affair and friendship endured for fifty years.

At the time of their introduction, Brooks was a successful portraitist whose subjects included Cocteau, d'Annunzio, and Rubinstein. She also had two paintings in French national collections and later received the *Légion d'honneur*. In the early twenties, she executed a series of striking likenesses of such members of NCB's circle as the Amazon herself; Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre; and Una, Lady Troubridge (lover of Radclyffe Hall), as well as self-portraits. In the Whistler manner, she painted

her figures against a subdued light, flattening them out; the blacks, whites, and greys dominating her palette became her artistic signature. D'Annunzio wrote an untitled poem on her color scheme. A melancholy tinged most of her portraits, giving a hard edge to the outlines of her sitters, yet she could also render the smug and the conceited with caricature and irony. Robert de Montesquiou dubbed her "Thief of Souls."

2. A reference to Einstein and his work on the theory of relativity.
3. The paintings are entitled *Gabriele d'Annunzio: The Poet in Exile* (1912; acquired by the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, later named the Musée National d'Art Moderne) and *The Comandante Gabriele d'Annunzio* (1916; Musée National d'Arte Moderne).
4. The sitter was perhaps the Marchesa Casati (d. 1951), née Luisa Annam, whom Brooks transformed into a modern Gorgon, with ropes of hair writhing like snakes and with feet like claws.
5. The Jeu de Paume and the Orangerie were erected in the mid-nineteenth century at the Place de la Concorde end of the Tuileries Garden and serve as painting-gallery annexes to the Louvre.
6. In a collection of notebooks that she kept for years, Brooks wrote down quotations, bits of poetry, aphorisms, proverbs, and attempts at the succinct statement. In her biography of Brooks, *Between Me and Life* (1974), Meryle Secrest reprinted two short stories by Brooks: a four-paragraph piece entitled "Hell": 101, about a young girl being slapped very hard on the hands by her mother, and "The Riviera Jungles": 404–06, written after Mrs. Goddard's death in 1902, linking the rotting forces of nature with an archetypal old woman who tries to lure the narrator to her death.
7. Brooks's at-times-untrustworthy memoirs, *No Pleasant Memories*, are in two sections, the first devoted to her adolescence and young womanhood, the second to her residence in Florence during World War II; she illustrated the text with drawings. Sections dealing with her brother, St. Mar (1867–1901), appeared in 1938, in the British magazine *Life and Letters To-day*, but her attempts to have the entire work published without change met with failure from the 1950s to 1971, despite the efforts of such friends as NCB, Somerset Maugham, Alice B. Toklas, and Sir Harold Acton. Her books of illustrations include *70 Dessins*, a limited-edition volume of her drawings, and *Portraits, tableaux, dessins* (1952), with an introduc-

tion by Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre, and “Appreciations, Critiques” by Apollinaire, Louis Vauxcelles, and Roger Marx, among others.

8. The source of the quotation is unidentified.

26. *Renée Vivien*

1. The English-born author Pauline Mary Tarn (1877–1909) lived most of her life in Paris and wrote, in French and under the pseudonym Renée Vivien, fourteen volumes of poetry, three collections of short stories, and two novels (one unfinished). Frequent themes include violets, lesbianism, and death. Renée was NCB’s first great love. They were introduced by their common friends Violet and Mary Shilleto, and for two years, 1899–1901, they lived together as lovers. Physical separation—NCB was, for a time, in Washington, D.C., Renée in Paris—contributed to the end of their relationship. By 1902, Renée had taken as her lover Baroness Hélène van Zuylen de Nievelt, née Rothschild (1868–1947), though in 1904, she and NCB traveled briefly to Lesbos. Renée subsequently described their affair in the novel *Une Femme m’apparut* (A Woman Appeared to Me) (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1904), in which NCB appears as Lorély. They continued to correspond and to meet on occasion until Renée’s death in November 1909, from anorexia or alcoholism, or both. A retrospective of her works (as well as those of Marie Lenéru) was held at NCB’s “Friday” of 10 June 1927.
2. Salomon Reinach (1858–1932), French philologist, archaeologist, and art historian. A friend of Renée and NCB, he assembled all available documentation relevant to their affair. In 1914, claiming to know little about Renée Vivien, he solicited biographical information from readers of *Notes and Queries* (11th Series, vol. 9, 20 June: 488). The following volume (dated 22 August 1914: 151) carried a lengthy, if circumspect, reply from Charles Brun. Reinach deposited Renée’s manuscripts with his own papers in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, with the stipulation that they remain inaccessible to the public until 2 January 2000.
3. Renée Vivien’s poems “Vaincue” (“Vanquished Woman”) and “Mes Victoires” (“My Victories”) appeared in her seventh collection of verse, *A l’heure des mains jointes* (At the Hour of Joined Hands) (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1906): 143 and 53, respectively.

4. In his biography, *Renée Vivien* (1917), Germain blamed NCB for Renée's death.
5. Jean Racine (1639–1699), the leading French neo-classical dramatist, with such plays as *Britannicus* (1669) and *Phèdre* (1677).
6. Perhaps a reference to *Le Tombeau de Renée Vivien* (The Tomb of Renée Vivien), a work in progress that NCB announced in 1910, but which was never published.
7. Renée adopted the violet as her symbol in memory of her first love, Violet Shilleto (c. 1880–1901). From the title of one of her works, Renée was known as “The Muse of Violets.”
8. From Renée Vivien's poem “Ainsi je parlerai” (“Thus Will I Speak”) in *A l'heure des mains jointes*, lines 1–4: 7.
9. Violet Shilleto died a Catholic. Three days before her own death, Renée converted to Catholicism in order to be reunited with her.
10. From Renée Vivien's poem “Prophétie” (“Prophecy”) in *Cendres et poussières* (Ashes and Dust) (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1902), lines 7–12: 39.
11. From Renée Vivien's poem “Locasta” in *Cendres et poussières*, lines 7 and 29: 83, where the line reads, “Seule je sais donner des nuits sans lendemains” (“I alone know how to give nights without morrows”).
12. This friend was Violet Shilleto.
13. A sentiment expressed in such works by Nietzsche as *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883–93), *Ecce Homo* (1888), and *Twilight of the Idols* (1889).
14. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582), Spanish Carmelite nun, mystic, a leading figure in the Catholic Reformation, and a Doctor of the Church. In her *Life* (chapter 29), she describes a vision in which an angel repeatedly pierced her heart with a golden spear, leaving her “all on fire with a great love for God.”
15. The works of the Lithuanian-born Milosz are characterized by a mystical religiosity. In “Cantique de la connaissance” (“Canticle of Knowledge”), line 120, he speaks of “pauvre science, la femme stérile” (“poor science, the sterile woman”). His “Epître à Storge” (Letter to Storge), the first of five prose-poem parts of *Ars Magna* (Great Art), was written in 1916 and published in the *Revue de Hollande* (January 1917): 659–71. At that time, Milosz knew nothing of Einstein's theories, yet the “Epître” contained the mathematician's conclusions on space, matter, time as a fourth dimension,

and the Universe. *Ars Magna* appeared in 1924 and was dedicated to the writer Baroness Antoine (Renée) de Brimont, one of Milosz's closest friends, whom he had met in 1915, at NCB's salon. "Cantique de la connaissance" forms one of five sections in *La Confession de Lemuel* (The Confession of Lemuel) (1922); the original edition of *La Confession* included "Épître à Storge" as an introduction.

16. *Nihumim* was published in 1915. NCB quotes the third of four stanzas, omitting the twenty-eighth line, "Qui cherche bien ne trouve rien ici" ("Who searches well finds nothing here").

27. Retrospective of Marie Lenéru BY MAGDELEINE MARX PAZ

1. Marie Lenéru (1875–1918), French woman of letters, was born in Brest to a naval family and spent her childhood in a maritime atmosphere. An attack of scarlet fever in 1887 left her deaf and threatened her with total blindness; her sight gradually improved, and in later years she read with the aid of a magnifying glass. She read avidly, developing her critical and literary faculties, and meeting and corresponding with many leading writers of the day. She made her reputation as a dramatist; her plays were examples of the "theatre of ideas," in which she discussed a variety of problems. She is also well known for her *Journal*, begun at the age of ten at her mother's urging. Illness prompted her to set it aside in 1890, and she resumed her entries only in 1893. Though prone to depression and resentment, she turned a smiling face to the world in the *Journal*. During World War I she repeatedly reflected in its pages on the atrocities of the conflict. In May 1918, she was stricken with influenza; its effects on her heart led to her death the following September.

Marie Lenéru attended NCB's salon, and the "Friday" of 10 June 1927, was devoted, in part, to a retrospective of her works.

2. Magdeleine Marx Paz, prolific author on social themes. Selected titles include *Femme* (Woman), (1919); *Femmes à vendre* (Women for Sale) (1936), on prostitution; and *Frère noir* (Black Brother) (1930), on racial issues. Concerning Russia and Bolshevism she wrote *C'est la lutte finale!* (The Final Struggle) (1923).
3. The two phrases are from Lenéru's *Journal*, the first half from the entry dated "Lorient, 1 June" 1901, the second part from that of

- "Wednesday, 13 February" 1901. Dates are translated from the *Journal de Marie Lenéru, avec une Préface de François de Curel*, 2 vols. (Paris: Georges Crès et C., 1922); hereafter, *Journal*.
4. Lenéru, *Journal*, "30 January" 1900.
 5. Paraphrased from successive entries in Lenéru, *Journal*, "June, 1901, Brutul, Tuesday" and "Sunday, 23 June" 1901.
 6. Lenéru, *Journal*, "Vannes, Sunday, 27 May" 1899.
 7. Lenéru, *Journal*, "Saturday, 3 March" 1900.
 8. Lenéru, *Journal*, "Wednesday 13 February" 1901.
 9. Lenéru, *Journal*, "Sunday, 24 October" 1897.
 10. Lenéru, *Journal*, "Friday, 1 September" 1899, "10 September" 1902.
 11. Lenéru, *Journal*, "7 April" 1899.
 12. Lenéru, *Journal*, "Monday, 18 December" 1899.
 13. *Les Affranchis* (The Emancipated) opened at the Odeon, Paris, on 10 December 1910, and enjoyed immense success; *Les Lutteurs* (The Wrestlers); *La Maison sur le roc* (The House on the Rock) was produced posthumously in 1924, and published in 1927; *Le Redoutable* (The Redoubtable One) was badly acted at the Odéon, Paris, on 22 January 1912, coldly received, and promptly withdrawn; *Le Mahdi* (The Mahdi); *Le Bonheur des autres* (The Happiness of Others) was published and performed in 1925; *La Triomphatrice* (The Victress) was performed in 1918; *La Paix* (Peace), written in 1915, was only produced in 1921. For Lenéru's comments on these plays, see her *Journal*, "Paris, October" 1910; "Neuilly, 1 June" 1912; "21 April" 1912; "Neuilly, 30 March" 1914, *passim*.
- Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1821–1881), critic and university professor at Geneva, kept a diary from 1847. The Russian-born diarist Marie Bashkirtseff (1860–1884) produced one of the most remarkable *journals intimes* in the nineteenth century. She began it in Nice in 1873, and continued to make entries (in French) up to eleven days before her death from consumption; in the closing pages she records her realization that she is beyond the help of doctors and medicine.
- In 1901, Marie Lenéru attempted her first novel, on the French Revolutionary figure, Louis de Saint-Just (1767–1794). A fragment appeared in 1905; the two-volume work, with a preface by Maurice Barrès, was published in 1922.
14. Lenéru, *Journal*, "5 October" 1900.

15. "Clarté," an intellectual group founded in May 1919, sought to instigate "l'internationale de la pensée" ("the international association of thought"), parallel to "l'internationale du peuple" ("the international association of people"). Its sponsor was Anatole France.
16. *The Book of France*, ed. Winifred Stephens (London and Paris, 1915), a collection of essays by such writers as Henry James, Anatole France, Remy de Gourmont, André Gide, and Rudyard Kipling, was published, in part, to raise money for French wounded in World War I. Marie Lenéru's contribution, "Le Témoin": 241-46, was followed by Lady Frazer's translation, "The Witness": 247-52. These first quotes appear on pp. 241, 242.
17. Lenéru, "Le Témoin": 242.
18. Lenéru, "Le Témoin": 242.
19. Lenéru, "Le Témoin": 243. Certain of these comments had appeared in her *Journal*, "Neuilly, December" 1914.
20. Sir Norman Angell, born Ralph Norman Angell Lane (1872-1967), English economist, pacifist, and writer, as well as rancher, prospector, and journalist in America until 1898. After World War I, he worked for international cooperation. He was a Labor Member of Parliament (1929-31) and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1933. NCB omitted Angell's comment, which Lenéru quoted in English: "This result cannot be achieved by any purely mechanical means. It involves what all human progress involves: a correction of idea. It must be approached through the mind" ("Le Témoin": 245); his supposed remarks cited here (in French in the original text) are, in fact, from George Bernard Shaw, as Lenéru, but not NCB, indicated in a note.
22. Lenéru, "Le Témoin": 245-46. NCB altered the verb from *se représente* ("turn up") to *se reproduise* ("happen").
23. Anti-war meetings were held on the steps of NCB's Temple à l'Amitié in 1917, and attended by journalists and writers like Aurel, Rachilde, and Séverine, who wanted to stop the killing. These gatherings probably helped foster NCB's Académie des Femmes.
24. Valentine Thomson, Marcel Proust's second cousin, wrote on a number of topics, among them *La Vie sentimentale de Rachel* (The Sentimental Life of Rachel) (1910), on the nineteenth-century French tragedienne, Elisa Rachel; *L'Art décoratif au foyer* (Decorative Art in the Home) (1913); *Young Europe* (1932), on politics and economics at the time of World War I; and *Le Corsair chez l'impératrice*

(The Corsair at the Court of the Empress) (1936), on John Paul Jones and the Empress Catherine the Great of Russia.

Sévérine, pseudonym of Caroline Rémy (1855–1929), was perhaps the outstanding French woman journalist of her day. From 1886 to 1888, she edited her own paper, *Le Cri du Peuple* (The Cry of the People), afterwards working as a freelance journalist. She opposed anti-Semitism, defended anarchists, joined first the Socialist Party (1918) then the Communist Party, and contributed to *l'Humanité* (1920–21). Her autobiography, *Line*, appeared in 1921.

Jeanne (Jane) Misme, writer on feminist themes, including *Pour le suffrage des femmes* (1909, on women's suffrage); she also edited *La Française: Journal de progrès féminine* (The French Woman: A Journal of Feminine Progress), 1906–7, 1911–15, 1922–23.

25. To end the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, Lysistrata, eponymous heroine of Aristophanes' comedy (411 B.C.), proposes to the women of Greece that they go on a sex strike until the men agree to make peace. "War," she proclaims, "shall be the concern of Women!" The soldiers and politicians eventually capitulate to their demands.
26. Léon Abensour, *L'Histoire général du féminisme* (The General History of Feminism), (1921).

28. P.P.C.: Leave-Taking

1. "P.P.C." is the standard abbreviation for "*pour prendre congé*" ("to take one's leave"). It was customary to give friends notice of one's departure by leaving at their homes one's calling card inscribed "P.P.C." in the left-hand corner.
2. In 1692, the poet and dramatist Jean Racine (1639–1699) moved to 24, rue des Marais-Saint-Germain (now, rue Visconti), a street roughly parallel to the rue Jacob; both intersect the rue Bonaparte (to the west) and the rue de Seine (to the east). The Directory was established in 1795, by the third French Constitution, which invested executive authority in five Directors. Its rule was ended by Napoleon's coup d'état of 18 Brumaire (9 November) 1799, and it was replaced by the Consulate. NCB's Doric temple, in the garden at 20, rue Jacob, dates from the First Empire (1804–1814).

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276 *Bibliography*

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278 *Bibliography*

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Index

- Académie-française: 26–27; 201 n.19;
exclusion of women, 8–9, 14,
242 n.1; members, 16 n.4,
205 n.18, 207 n.1, 209 n.9,
212 n.1, 238 n.57; Paul Valéry's
election, 46, 99, 121, 227 n.9,
229 nn.7, 8, 13, 231 n.1, 236 n.37,
238 n.60
- Academy of Women, 14–15, 133–40,
242 n.1, 249 n.1, 253 n.1,
266 n.23
- Acton, Harold, 224 n.1, 257 n.10,
261 n.7
- Adam, Juliette, 235 n.34
- Adventures of the Mind* (Barney), xiv,
1, 2, 8–16
- Aldington, Richard, 119, 237 n.50
- "Aller et Retour," 166–68
- Almanac of Good Things of France*
(Gramont), 161, 252 nn.3, 4
- Amande, Princesse. *See* Delarue-
Mardrus, Lucie
- Aman-Jean, Edmond, 109, 234 n.26
- Amazon and the Page, The* (Jay), 12–
13
- "Amazon's Reply, The" (Barney), 50–
51, 217 n.6
- Amiel, Henri-Frédéric, 193, 265 n.13
- Anderson, Margaret, 212 n.22
- Anderson, Sherwood, 6, 244 n.1,
256 n.1
- Angell, Sir Norman, 195, 226 n.20
- "Anger of Samson, The" (Vigny), 59,
67, 213 n.12
- Anglesey, Marchioness of, 109, 233–
34 n.23, 260 n.1
- Anne (Valéry), 109–10, 233 n.20
- Anthiel, George, 13, 121, 238 n.60
- Antiphon* (Barnes), 254 n.1
- Aphrodite (Louÿs), 32, 202 n.1,
203 n.2
- Apollinaire, Guillaume, 171, 224 n.8,
228 n.1, 230 n.17, 234 n.27,
250 n.8, 256 n.2, 260 n.20, 262 n.7
- "Apology of Genius" (Loy), 158–60,
250–51 n.2
- Aragon, Louis, 109, 234 n.27
- Arnim, Elisabeth (Bettina) von, 72,
217–18 n.17
- Arthur Gordon Pym* (Poe), 65
- "Artificiality" (Wickham), 145, 245 n.6
- Astarté* (Louÿs), 40, 206 n.29
- Aurel, 11, 15, 89, 137, 155–57,
224 n.7, 242 n.12, 249 n.1,

- Aurel (*Continued*)
 266 n.23; description of Natalie Barney by, 134 n.37
- Aurore* (Valéry), 103, 109, 232 n.9, 233 n.20
- Baccara, Luisa, 83, 222–23 n.19
- “Bad Literary News” (Rouveyre), 99
- Ballad of Reading Gaol, The* (Wilde), 254 n.6
- Ballet mécanique* (Anthiel), 13, 238 n.60
- Balzac, Honoré de, 66, 87; *Séraphita*, 33–34; 204 n.10
- Barbey d’Aureville, Jules-Amédée, 42, 207 n.39
- Barnes, Djuna, 3, 6, 11, 12, 13, 15, 165–70, 171, 227 n.15, 248 n.1, 254 n.3, 255 n.8; liaisons of, 2, 253–54 n.1. Works: *Book, A*, 166, 253 n.1; “Aller et Retour,” 166–68; *Antiphon*, 254 n.1; “Finis,” 169; “Fragment of a Portrait,” 169; *Ladies Almanack*, 14, 160, 240 n.8, 251 n.5, 253–54 n.1; *Nightwood*, 254 n.1; “Paradise,” 169, 255 n.9; “Passion, The” 168, 254–55 n.7; *Ryder*, 169–70, 254 n.1, 255 n.12; *Spillway*, 255 n.7
- Barney, Albert Clifford, 92, 226 nn.2, 4
- Barney, Alice Pike, 109, 233 n.22
- Barney, J. P., 26 n.
- Barney, Joshua, 25–26 n., 200 nn.10, 11, 201 nn.16, 17
- Barney, Laura, 7, 221 n.7, 232 n.7, 241 n.17, 242 n.13
- Barney, Natalie Clifford: as described by Aurel, 134–37; as described by Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, 137–40; and feminism, 12–13, 145–46, 195–96, fictionalized accounts of, 154, 203 n.3, 210 n.3, 218 n.21, 240 n.8, 243 n.1, 247 n.1, 249 n.5, 251 n.5, 254 n.1, 262 n.1; liaisons of, xiv, 1–2, 4, 12, 15, 88, 92, 202 n.2, 203 n.3, 204 n.12, 205 n.18, 208 n.3, 220 n.1, 224 n.5, 225 nn.12, 19, 226 nn.3, 9, 232 n.7, 234 n.23, 240 nn.4, 8, 243 nn.1, 4, 251 n.1, 252 n.2, 260 n.1, 262 nn.1, 2, 263 n.4; residence at 20, rue Jacob, 2–3, 62–63, 206–7 n.36, 214 n.18, 231 n.4, 236 n.37, 256 n.1 (*see also* Salons, Parisian literary; Temple to Friendship); and selling stock in artists, 13–14, 114–21, 237 nn.48, 51, 52, 238 n.57. Works: *Adventures of the Mind*, xvi, 1, 2, 8–16; “Amazon’s Reply, The,” 50–51, 217 n.6; *Further Thoughts of an Amazon*, 22; *Indiscreet Recollections*, 210 n.1; *Letters to a Woman I Have Known*, 32, 34–35, 203 n.3, 205 n.14; *Mallarmé*, 38; “Memoirs of a European-American,” 7; “My Country ‘tis of Thee,” 13; *New Thoughts of an Amazon*, 200 n.5; *One Who Is Legion, The*, 14–15, 204 n.10; *Our Secret Loves*, 26, 201 n.18; *Perilous Advantage, A*, 4; *Poems and Poems: Other Alliances*, 208 n.5; *Scatterings*, 15, 134, 139, 242 n.3; *Some Portraits and Sonnets of Women*, 4, 35, 203 n.3, 205 n.15; *Thoughts of an Amazon*, 7, 15, 58–59, 59 n., 71, 81, 87–88, 90, 136, 213 n.10, 221 n.11, 224 nn.3, 4, 225 n.14; “To the Mothers of Future Christs,” 77; “Tomb of Renée Vivien, The,” 185, 263 n.6; *Traits and Portraits*, 230 n.20; untitled poems, 23–24, 113; “Woman Who Lives with Me, The,” 15
- Barrès, Maurice, 5, 27–28, 80, 100,

- 194, 202 n.20, 220 n.2, 248 n.1, 265 n.13
- Bashkirtseff, Marie, 193, 265 n.13
- Bassiano, Princesse di, 238 n.59; and selling stock in artists, 119, 120, 121, 237 n.51, 238 nn.56, 57
- Baudelaire, Charles, 33, 235 n.32, 245 n.4, 260 n.20. Works: *Flowers of Evil, The*, 33, 60, 203 nn.5, 7, 214 nn.16, 17; *Wreckage, The*, 33, 203 nn.5, 6
- Beach, Sylvia, 119, 237 n.51, 238 n.60, 250 n.1, 257 n.9, 258 n.16, 259 n.19
- Beast, The* (Fleg), 75
- "Belated Gift of Flowers, The" (Gramont), 49, 210 n.4
- Bel-Gazou, 152, 248 n.10
- Benda, Julien, 100, 230 n.18
- Berenson, Bernard, 42–44, 100, 111, 184, 207 n.38, 230 n.20, 235 n.34
- Bergery, Bettina, 211 n.12
- Bernhardt, Sarah, 203 n.3
- Berthelot, Hélène, 37, 80, 220 n.3
- Berthelot, Philippe, 18, 37, 80, 199 n., 208 n.2, 220 n.3
- "Bibliographic Essay" (Hugnet), 176
- Blake, William, 125, 150, 240 n.5, 246 n.19
- Boileau-Despreaux, Nicholas, 104–5, 232 n.11
- Book, A* (Barnes), 166, 253 n.1
- Book of a Thousand and One Nights, The* (Mardrus), 92, 226 n.1, 243 n.4
- Bourdelle, Émile Antoine, 46, 208 nn.2, 6
- Bourdet-Pozzi, Catherine, 113, 236 n.41
- Breton, André, 234 n.27, 259 n.20
- Brimont, Baroness Antoine (Renée) de, 42, 206 n.35, 264 n.15
- Brooks, Romaine, 3, 13, 15, 180–83, 231 n.4, 238 n.60, 261 n.6; liaisons of, 2, 10, 80, 81, 82, 83, 220 n.1, 221 nn.7, 9, 10, 223 n.24, 232 n.7, 234 n.23, 240 n.4, 252 n.2, 260 n.1. Works: *No Pleasant Memories*, 182–83, 261 n.7; portraits by, 11, 80, 180–81, 182, 221 n.7, 260–61 nn.1, 3; *70 Dessins*, 182–83, 261 n.7
- Brun, Charles, 34, 205 n.14, 262 n.2
- Butler, Samuel, 126, 240 n.6
- Caillavet, Mme Arman de, 46, 207 n.1, 209 n.6
- Cambon, Jules, 34, 112, 205 n.14, 236 n.37
- "Canticle of Knowledge" (Milosz), 98–99, 189, 263–64 n.15
- Carlyle, Thomas, 99, 126, 229 n.10, 241 n.10
- Cassou, Jean, 128, 241 n.16
- Child Prophet, The* (Fleg), 75
- Cities of the Plain* (Proust), 59, 60, 67, 213 n.12, 214 n.15, 225 n.9, 226 n.1
- Clarissa Harlowe* (Richardson), 128, 241 n.15
- "Clarté," 193–94, 266 n.15
- Claudé, Paul, 37, 152, 205 n.20, 227 n.9, 248 n.9
- Claudine in Paris* (Colette), 152, 247–48 n.8
- Clélie* (Scudéry), 225 n.13
- Clermont-Tonnerre, Duchesse de. See Gramont, Elisabeth de
- Cleyrergue, Berthe, 1, 3
- Cocteau, Jean, 120, 175, 210 n.5, 215 n.32, 227 n.9, 234 n.27, 238 n.57, 257 n.10, 260 n.1
- Colette, 2, 11, 13, 151–52, 227 n.14, 246–47 n.1, 247 nn.3, 5, 6, 247–48 nn.8, 10. Works: *Claudine in Paris*, 152, 247–48 n.8; *Journey for Myself*, 152, 248 n.12; *Morning*

- Colette (*Continued*)
Glory, 152, 248 n.11; *Vagabond, The*, 151, 247 nn.2, 3
- Colette, Jules-Joseph, 151, 247 n.7
 “Commercial Genius of Paul Valéry, The” (Gautier-Boissiere), 114–15
 “Composition as Explanation” (Stein), 257 n.10
- Conder, Charles, 144, 245 n.4
- Contemplation of Death, The* (D’Annunzio), 84, 223 n.23
- Contemplative Quarry, The* (Wickham), 146
- “Contrast, The” (Wickham), 150, 246 n.16
- Corneille, Pierre, 109, 234 n.29
- Crouzet, Philippe, 141, 243 n.3
- Cultivation of Ideas, The* (Gourmont), 178, 259 n.20
- Cunard, Nancy, 165, 254 n.4
- Dahon, Renée, 53, 212 n.21
 “Daily Epilogues” (Gourmont), 53, 212 n.23
- Dancer of Shamahka* (Ohanian), 46, 208 n.4
- Dangerous Liaisons* (Laclos), 142, 243 n.7
- D’Annunzio, Gabriele, 7, 10, 13, 21, 79–85, 181, 199 n.3, 220–21 nn.1, 4–10, 222 nn.12, 14–18, 223 nn.19–21, 24, 25, 260 n.1.
 Work: *Contemplation of Death, The*, 84, 223 n.23; *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, The*, 82, 222 n.13
- Dars, Jean, 141, 243 n.2
- Defland de la Lande, Marquise du, 49, 210 n.2
 “Definition” (Wickham), 146, 245–46 n.14
- Degas, Edgar, 5, 169, 255 n.8
- De Grey, Lady, 61, 214 n.19
- Delarue-Mardrus, Lucie, 1, 2, 11–12, 15, 64, 65, 88, 92–93, 128, 141–43, 148, 155, 215 nn.27, 28, 224 n.4, 226 nn.1, 6, 232 n.7, 235 n.32, 242 n.14, 243 nn.1, 4, 251 n.1; as Poe’s translator, 111, 143, 215 n.31; description of Natalie Barney by, 137–40. Works: “Prefatory Poem,” 141–42; *Selected Poems, Last Unpublished Verse, Translations*, 143; untitled poem, 201 n.18
- Demon, The* (Fleg), 75
- Dolent, Jean, 156, 249 n.6
- Douglas, Lord Alfred, 125, 202 n.2, 239–40 n.4, 260 n.1; “Two Loves,” 67, 215–16 n.35
- Dreyfus Affair, 4–8, 16 n.5
- Duse, Eleanora, 83, 220 n.1, 223 nn.20, 21
- Eliot, T. S., 13, 119, 121, 237 n.50, 238 n.58, 254 n.1
 “Emperor’s New Clothes, The” (Andersen), 176–77
- Endymion* (Keats), 40, 206 n.30
- “Evening Land, The” (Lawrence), 173
- Evening with M Teste, The* (Valéry), 102, 105–6, 107 n., 231 n.2, 233 nn.12, 14, 17
- “Envoi” (Wickham), 146
- Etudes and Preludes* (Vivien), 34, 204 n.12
- Eureka* (Poe), 111, 235 n.35
- Exiles* (Joyce), 178, 259 n.19
- Fabre, Lucien, 120, 237 n.53
- Fargue, Léon-Paul, 120, 237 n.54, 238 n.59
- Farrère, Claude, 37, 205 n.18
- Faust* (Goethe), 156, 249 n.7
- Fels, Florent, 109, 234 n.27

- "Finis" (Barnes), 169
 "Finistère" (Gramont), 163–64
Finnegans Wake (Joyce), 178–79, 258 n.17
 Fitzgerald, F. Scott, 256 n.1
 Fleg, Edmond, 7, 75–76, 77–78, 219–19 n.1. Works: *Beast, The*, 75; *Child Prophet, The*, 75; *Demon, The*, 75; *Jewish Anthology*, 77
Flowers of Evil, The (Baudelaire), 33, 60, 203 nn.5, 7, 214 nn.16, 17
 Ford, Ford Madox, 126, 165, 240 n.6, 253 n.1, 254 n.3
Foreign Figures (Jaloux), 126, 133, 241 n.9, 242 n.2
 "Fragment of a Portrait" (Barnes), 169
 France, Anatole, 5, 6, 13, 16 n.4, 45–48, 83, 100, 184, 207 n.1, 208 nn.2, 4, 6, 229 n.8, 231 n.1, 266 nn.15, 16
 France, Emma, 46, 208 n.6
 Franchetti, Baroness, 91, 225 n.19
 "Fresh Start, The" (Wickman), 149–50
 "Friendship of Women, The" (Vivien), 254 n.2
Further Thoughts of an Amazon (Barney), 22

 Gallimard, Gaston, 120, 238 n.55
 Gautier, Théophile, 33, 204 n.10
 Gauthier-Villars, Henry, 246 n.1, 247–48 n.8
General History of Feminism, The (Abensour), 196
 Germain, André, 93, 226–27 n.9, 233 n.20; "Homage to Valéry, An," 108–10; *Renée Vivien*, 185, 263 n.4
 "Gertrude Stein" (Loy), 172–73, 256–57 n.5
 Ghika, Princess. *See* Pougy, Liane de
 Gide, André, 5, 6, 13, 57, 124, 125, 128, 150, 202 n.1, 213 n.4, 215 n.32, 227 n.9, 231 n.4, 239–40 nn.1–5, 246 n.19, 266 n.16; and André Rouveyre, 99–101, 228 n.1, 229–30 n.15
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 73–74, 129, 218 n.27, 249 n.7; *Faust*, 156, 249 n.7
 Gourmont, Jean de, 49, 210 n.5
 Gourmont, Remy de, 3, 9, 10, 16 n.8, 47, 48, 49–56, 99–100, 209 n.10, 209–10 nn.1, 5, 211 nn.7, 9, 14–16, 212 n.24, 217 n.6, 230 nn.15, 17, 266 n.16. Works: *Cultivation of Ideas, The*, 178, 259 n.20; "Daily Epilogues," 53, 212 n.23; *Intimate Letters to the Amazon*, 55, 210 nn.1, 3, 212 n.23, 228 n.1, 250 n.8; *Letters to the Amazon*, 51, 54–55, 137, 209–10 n.1, 211 n.13, 228 n.2, 237 n.50; *Night in the Luxembourg, A*, 70, 217 n.9
 Gracián, Baltasar, 97, 228–29 n.5
 Gramont, Elisabeth de, 6, 11, 15, 103, 108, 128, 158, 161–64, 231 nn.1, 4, 232 n.7, 233 n.19, 240 n.7, 250 n.1, 251–52 n.1, 260 n.1, 262 n.7. Works: *Almanac of Good Things of France*, 161, 252–3, 4; "Belated Gift of Flowers, The," 49, 210 n.4; "Finistère," 163–64; *History of Samuel Bernard and His Children*, 162, 253 n.7; *Proust and Montesquiou*, 161–62, 252 n.5
Great Art (Milosz), 189, 263–64 n.15
Green Shoots (Morand), 57, 212 n.2
Guermantes Way, The (Proust), 59, 63, 214 n.15, 215 n.25

 Hahn, Reynaldo, 64, 215 nn.29, 32
 Hall, Radclyffe, 15, 260 n.1; *Well of Loneliness, The*, 4
 Hemingway, Ernest, 6, 256 n.1

- Heredia, José-Maria de, 5, 16 n.4, 204 n.11, 236 n.41
- Heredia, Louise de, 34, 38, 204 n.11
- Hérédo, L'* (Daudet), 137 n., 242 n.11
- History of Samuel Bernard and His Children* (Gramont), 162, 253 n.7
- "Homage to Valéry, An" (Germain), 108–10
- "House of Berger, The" (Vigny), 59, 61
- Hugnet, Georges, 176, 258 n.12
- Huysmans, Joris-Karl, 153, 241 n.14, 248–49 n.3, 252–53 n.6
- Indiscreet Recollections* (Barney), 210 n.1
- Insinuation* (Valéry), 103
- Intimate Letters to the Amazon* (Gramont), 55, 210 nn.1, 3, 212 n.23, 228 n.1, 250 n.8
- Jacob, Mademoiselle, 90, 225 n.13
- Jacob, Max, 7, 9, 86–91, 171, 223–24 nn.1, 5, 8, 225 n.17, 234 n.27; "Conversations," 89–90, 91, 225 nn.9, 10
- Jaloux, Edmond, 68, 126–27, 216 n.2, 241 nn.9, 12, 242 n.2. Works: *Foreign Figures*, 126, 133, 241 n.9, 242 n.2; *Proserpina's Boudoir*, 127; *Rainer Maria Rilke*, 68
- Jay, Karla, xi–xiv, 1–17; *Amazon and the Page, The*, 12–13
- Jewish Anthology* (Fleg), 77
- Jocelyn* (Lamartine), 33
- Jammes, Francis, 161, 250 n.8, 252 n.4
- Journal* (Lenéru), 191, 192, 193, 264 n.1
- Journey for Myself* (Colette), 152, 248 n.12
- Jouvenel, Henri de, 94, 227 n.14, 246 n.1
- Joyce, James, 177–79, 240 n.6, 254 n.3. Works: *Exiles*, 178, 259 n.19; *Finnegans Wake*, 178–79, 258 n.17; *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, A*, 178, 258–59 n.18; *Ulysses*, 174, 177–78, 240 n.6, 257 n.9, 258 nn.15, 16
- Keats, John, 126, 144, 205 n.24, 206 n.30, 240 n.7, 244 n.3; *Endymion*, 40, 206 n.30; "On a Grecian Urn," 34, 43, 204–5 n.13
- Labbé, Louise, 73, 218 n.22
- Ladies Almanack* (Barnes), 14, 160, 240 n.8, 251 n.5, 253–54 n.1
- Lamartine, Alphonse de, 21, 199 n.3, 206 n.35; *Jocelyn*, 33, 204 n.10
- Landor, Walter Savage, 126, 240 n.6
- Langlois, Louise (Mme Jean-Paul), 175, 257–58 n.11
- Larbaud, Valery, 120, 126, 128, 178, 238 nn.57, 58, 240 n.6, 258 n.16
- La Rochefoucauld, Duc François de, 134, 242 n.5
- "Last Confession, A" (Rosetti), 41, 206 n.33
- Laurencin, Marie, 171, 227 n.9, 234 n.27, 256 n.2
- Lawrence, D. H., 236 n.39; "Evening Land, The," 173
- Leblanc, Georgette, 53, 212 n.22
- Le Bon, Gustave, 243 n.8
- Lenéru, Marie, 14, 15, 191–96, 262 n.1, 264 n.1. Works: *Journal*, 191, 192, 193, 264 n.1; plays by, 192–93, 264 n.1, 265 n.13; *Saint-Just*, 193, 194, 265 n.13; "Witness, The" 194–95, 266 n.16

- "Letter to Storage" (Milosz), 189, 263–64 n.15
- Letters to a Woman I Have Known* (Barney), 32, 34–35, 203 n.3, 205 n.14
- Letters to the Amazon* (Gourmont), 51, 54–55, 137, 209–10 n.1, 211 n.13, 228 n.2, 237 n.50
- Lipchitz, Jacques, 6
- Little Old House, The* (Wickham), 146
- "Locasta" (Vivien), 187, 263 n.11
- Louis, Georges, 206 n.28
- Louÿs, Mme Pierre. *See* Heredia, Louise de
- Louÿs, Pierre, 2, 9, 10, 27, 32–44, 102, 103, 108, 202–3 n.1, 204 n.11, 205 n.21, 206 nn.29, 33, 34, 207 nn.37, 40, 230 n.15, 231 n.4. Works: *Aphrodite*, 32, 202 n.1, 203 n.2; *Astarté*, 40, 206 n.29; "New Delight, A," 206 n.25; "Noctv Renata," 38, 205 n.23; "Poëtoque," 36, 205 n.17; *Songs of Bilitis*, 10, 32, 33, 34, 202 n.1, 203 n.4, 204–5 n.13
- Loy, Mina, 15, 158–60, 171, 177, 250 n.1. Works: "Apology of Genius," 158–60, 250–51 n.2; "Gertrude Stein," 172–73, 256–57 n.5; *Lunar Baedeker* (*Lunar Baedeker*), 160, 250 n.1, 251 nn.2, 4; "Widow's Jazz, The," 160, 251 n.3
- Lugné-Poë, Aurélien-François, 178, 259 n.19
- Lunar Baedeker* (*Lunar Baedeker*) (Loy), 160, 250 n.1, 251 nn.2, 4
- McAlmon, Robert, 250 n.1, 251 n.2
- Mademoiselle de Maupin* (Gautier), 33
- Mæterlinck, Maurice, 53, 211–12 nn.18, 20–22
- Making of Americans, The* (Stein), 173–75, 176, 257 n.6, 258 n.12
- Malherbe, François de, 109, 234 n.29
- Mallarmé* (Barney), 38
- Mallarmé, Stéphane, 109, 110, 111, 123, 200 n.7, 206 n.27, 230 n.1, 231 n.4, 234 n.29, 235 n.32, 239 nn.62–64
- Man with a Hammer, The* (Wickham), 146
- Mardrus, J.-C., 9, 88, 91, 92–95, 99, 165, 224 n.4, 225 n.18, 227 nn.10, 15, 230 n.15, 232 n.7, 235 n.32, 243 n.1, 251 n.1, 254 n.2. Works: *Book of a Thousand and One Nights, The*, 92, 226 n.1, 243 n.4; *Queen of Sheba, The*, 94, 227 n.11
- Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The* (Blake), 125, 150, 240 n.5, 246 n.19
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, 178, 259 n.20
- Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, The* (d'Annunzio), 82, 222 n.13
- Marx, Magdeleine. *See* Paz, Magdeleine Marx
- "Mary Nettie" (Stein), 259 n.20
- Matisse, Henri, 255 n.1
- Maugham, W. Somerset, 260 n.1, 261 n.7
- Maurras, Charles, 5, 6, 11, 16 n.8
- Medlar* (Gramont), 161, 252 n.4
- "Memoirs of a European-American" (Barney), 7
- "Memoirs of My Business" (Rouveyre), 100
- Millay, Edna St. Vincent, 244 n.10, 253–54 n.1
- Milosz, Oscar Venceslas de, 129, 188–90, 206 n.35, 229 n.9, 241 n.19, 263–64 n.15. Works: "Canticle of Knowledge," 98–99, 189, 263–64 n.15; *Great Art*, 189, 263–

- Milosz (*Continued*)
 64 n.15; "Letter to Storge," 189,
 263–64 n.15; "Nihumim," 189–90,
 264 n.16
- Miomandre, Francis de, 103, 128,
 232 n.6, 241 n.16
- Misme, Jeanne (Jane), 195, 267 n.24
- Monnier, Adrienne, 119, 237 nn.51,
 52, 238 n.59, 240 n.6, 258 n.16
- Montesquiou, Comte Robert de, 4,
 161–62, 211 n.12, 226 n.6, 252 n.5,
 252–52 n.6, 260 n.1
- Morand, Paul, 57, 66, 127, 212 nn.1,
 2, 213 nn.9, 10, 215 n.32, 241 n.13.
 Works: *Green Shoots*, 57, 212 n.2;
 "Ode to Marcel Proust," 57–58,
 213 n.5
- Moreno, Marguerite, 151, 247 n.3
- Morning Glory* (Colette), 152,
 248 n.11
- Mühlfeld, Jeanne (Mme Lucien), 93,
 227 n.9
- Murphy, Esther, 126, 240–41 n.8
- Murry, John Middleton, 106–7,
 215 n.32, 232 n.10
- My Blue Notebooks* (Pougy),
 224 nn.5, 6, 8, 225 n.13, 233 n.22,
 234 n.23
- "My Country 'tis of Thee" (Barney),
 13
- "My Victories" (Vivient), 184
- Narcissus* (Valéry), 109, 110, 113, 119,
 233 n.20
- "Nervous Prostration" (Wickham),
 148–49
- "New Delight, A" (Louÿs), 206 n.25
- New Thoughts of an Amazon* (Bar-
 ney), 200 n.5
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 20, 129, 188,
 241 n.18, 263 n.13
- Nievelt, Baroness Hélène van Zuylen
 de, 262 n.1
- Nightwood* (Barnes), 254 n.1
- "Nihumim" (Milosz), 189–90,
 264 n.16
- No Pleasant Memories* (Brooks), 182–
 83, 261 n.7
- "Nootv Renata" (Louÿs), 38, 205 n.23
- Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*,
The (Rilke), 68, 69, 72–73, 216 n.4,
 217 n.12
- "Ode to Marcel Proust" (Morand),
 57–58, 213 n.5
- Ohanian, Armen, 45–46, 208 nn.3–5;
Dancer of Shamahka, 46, 208 n.4
- Old Mistress, An* (Barbey d'Aureville),
 42, 207 n.39
- "On a Grecian Urn" (Keats), 34, 46,
 204–5 n.13
- One Who Is Legion, The* (Barney),
 14–15, 204 n.10
- Orloff, Chana, 210 n.4
- O'Sullivan, Vincent, 76–77, 100, 111,
 220 n.10, 230 n.19, 236 n.36
- Our Secret Loves* (Barney), 26,
 201 n.18
- Palme* (Valéry), 109, 233 n.20
- "Paradise" (Barnes), 169, 255 n.9
- Parisian literary salons. *See* Salons,
 Parisian literary
- Pascal, Blaise, 239 n.65
- "Passion, The" (Barnes), 168, 254–
 55 n.7
- Paulhan, Paul, 89, 224–25 n.9
- Paz, Magdeleine Marx, 193–94,
 264 n.2; "Retrospective of Marie
 Lenéru," 191–93
- Perilous Advantage, A* (Barney), 4
- Picasso, Pablo, 6, 171, 224 nn.1, 8,
 255 n.1, 257 n.10
- Pierre-Quint, Léon, 125, 239 n.2
- Poe, Edgar Allan, 65, 111, 143,
 215 n.31, 235 nn.32, 33, 35,

- 236 n.36. Works: *Arthur Gordon Pym*, 65; *Eureka*, 111, 235 n.35; "To Helen," 111, 235 n.33
- Poems and Poems: Other Alliances* (Barney), 208 n.5
- "Poétique" (Louÿs), 36, 205 n.17
- Poiret, Paul, 151, 222 n.17, 247 n.3
- Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, A (Joyce), 178, 258–59 n.18
- Porto-Riche, Georges de, 47, 209 n.9
- Pougy, Liane de, 4, 88, 225 n.19, 236 n.37. Works: *My Blue Notebooks*, 224 nn.5, 6, 8, 225 n.13, 233 n.22, 234 n.23; *Sapphic Idyll*, 203 n.3
- Pound, Ezra, 8, 13, 118–19, 237 nn.48, 50, 238 n.60, 254 n.4
- "Preciosilla" (Stein), 14
- "Prefatory Poem" (Delarue-Mardrus), 141–42
- "Prophecy" (Vivien), 187
- Proserpina's Boudoir* (Jaloux), 127
- Proust and Montesquiou* (Gramont), 161–62, 252 n.5
- Proust, Marcel, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16 n.6, 27, 57–67, 86, 162, 213 nn.6–11, 214 n.21, 215 nn.23, 29, 216 n.35, 227 n.9, 266 n.24. Works: *Cities of the Plain*, 59, 60, 67, 213 n.12, 214 n.15, 225 n.9, 226 n.1; *Guermantes Way*, *The*, 59, 214 n.15; *Remembrance of Things Past*, 5, 212 n.2, 213 nn.4, 5, 214 n.13, 252 n.6
- Psychology of Peoples, The* (Le Bon), 142, 243 n.8
- Quail* (Gramont), 161, 252 n.4
- Queen of Sheba, The* (Mardrus), 94, 227 n.11
- Rainer Maria Rilke (Jaloux), 68
- Rachilde, 15, 153–54, 248 n.1, 253 n.1, 266 n.23. See also Barney, Natalie Clifford, fictionalized accounts of
- Racine, Jean, 185, 197, 232 n.11, 263 n.5, 267 n.2
- Rappoport, Charles, 46, 209 n.6
- Recluse and the Sly One: Gourmont and Gide, The* (Rouveyre), 16 n.8, 99–100, 229–30 n.15
- Régnier, Marie de, 113, 236 n.41
- Reinach, Salomon, 5, 6–7, 107, 109, 207 n.38, 233 n.18; and Renée Vivien, 185–86, 262 n.2
- Remembrance of Things Past* (Proust), 5, 212 n.2, 213 nn.4, 5, 214 n.13, 252 n.6
- Renée Vivien* (Germain), 185, 263 n.4
- "Retrospective of Marie Lenéru" (Paz), 191–93
- Rilke, Rainer Maria, 9, 13, 27, 68–74, 216–17 nn.1–5, 218 n.22; *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, The*, 68, 69, 72–73, 216 n.4, 217 n.12
- Rimbaud, Arthur, 178, 259–60 n.20; "Vowels," 178, 259 n.20
- Ripon, Constance Gladys, Marchioness of, 61, 214 n.19
- Rodin, Auguste, 157, 208 n.2, 249 n.7
- Roggers, Henriette, 37, 205 n.18
- Ronsard, Pierre de, 109, 234 n.29
- Rops, Félicien, 127, 241 n.14
- Rosetti, Dante Gabriel, 41, 206 n.33; "last Confession, A," 41, 206 n.33
- Rothermere, Lilian, Viscountess, 121, 238 n.58
- Rothschild, Baroness Adolphe de, 61, 214 n.19
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 20, 199 n.2
- Rouveyre, André, 11, 49, 96–101, 128, 210 n.3, 228 nn.1, 3, 228–29 nn.5, 7. Works: "Bad Literary News," 99; *Memoirs of My Bust-*

- Rouveyre (*Continued*)
ness, 100; *Recluse and the Sly One: Gourmont and Gide, The*, 16 n.8, 99–100, 229–30 n.15
- Rubinstein, Ida, 228 n.13, 260 n.1
- Ryder* (Barnes), 169–70, 254 n.1, 255 n.12
- Sabini, Countess Yvonne, 38, 206 n.26
- Saint-Just* (Lenéru), 193, 194, 265 n.13
- Saint-Just, Louis Antoine Léon Florelle de, 200 n.14
- Salons, Parisian literary: as affected by Dreyfus Affair, 5–6; elitism in, 12–13; of Aurel, 11, 15, 249 n.1; of French nobility, 4, 210 n.2; of Geneviève Straus, 5; of Gertrude Stein, 6, 255–56 n.1; of Jeanne Mühfeld, 227 n.9; of Mme Arman de Caillavet, 207 n.1; of Madeleine de Scudéry, 255 n.13; of Natalie Barney, 2–4, 5–7, 8, 13, 14, 15–16, 70, 108–9, 138, 154, 197–98, 199 n.1, 217 n.8, 227 n.9, 238 n.60, 241 n.19, 264 n.15; of Rachilde, 248 n.1; of Stéphane Mallarmé, 123, 181, 239 n.62; of Yvonne Serruys-Mille, 208 n.2; and selling stock in artists, 114
- Samuel Bernard and His Age* (Gramont), 162
- Sapphic Idyll* (Pougy), 203 n.3
- Sappho, 9, 107, 150, 202 n.1, 233 n.16, 246 n.18
- Scatterings* (Barney), 15, 134, 139, 242 n.3
- Seignobos, Charles, 109, 184, 208 n.2, 234 n.25
- Selected Poems, Last Unpublished Verse, Translations* (Delarue-Mardrus), 143
- Séraphita* (Balzac), 33–34, 204 n.10
- Serruys-Mille, Yvonne, 45, 208 n.2
- 70 Dessins* (Brooks), 182–83, 261 n.7
- Sévérine, 195, 266 n.23, 267 n.24
- Shilleto, Violet, 186, 187, 206 n.32, 262 n.1, 263 nn.7, 9, 12
- “Silhouette of a Serpent” (Valéry), 113, 236 n.43
- Sinclair, May, 119, 237 n.50
- Sitwell, Dame Edith, 175, 257 n.10
- Some Portraits and Sonnets of Women* (Barney), 4, 35, 203 n.3, 205 n.15
- Songs of Bilitis* (Louÿs), 10, 32, 33, 34, 40, 202 n.1, 203 n.4, 204–5 n.13
- “Sonnet 116” (Shakespeare), 24
- Sorel, Cécile, 57, 212–13 n.3
- Spillway* (Barnes), 255 n.7
- Spinoza, Baruch (Benedict), 51, 211 n.14
- Spiritual Crisis* (Valéry), 104
- Stein, Gertrude, 6, 11, 13, 91, 171–79, 225 n.20, 244 n.1, 250 n.1, 254 n.3, 255–56 n.1. Works: “Composition as Explanation,” 257 n.10; *Making of Americans, The*, 173–75, 176, 257 n.6, 258 n.12; “Mary Nettie,” 259 n.20; “Preciosilla,” 14; “Susie Asado,” 14; *Tender Buttons*, 178, 260 n.21; “Water Pipe,” 175–76, 257–58 n.11
- Stendhal, 126–27, 134, 242 n.4
- Straus, Geneviève, 5
- “Susie Asado” (Stein), 14
- Swedenborg, Emanuel, 73, 218 n.27
- Swinburne, Charles, 144, 244–45 n.4
- Symbolist movement, 200 n.7, 209 n.1, 211 n.18, 222 n.14, 230 n.1, 234 n.29, 237 n.54,

- 241 n.14, 248 n.1, 250 n.8,
259 n.20
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 21, 199 n.2,
206 n.35
- Tarn, Pauline Mary. *See* Vivien,
Renée
- Temple to Friendship, 3, 15, 40, 53,
59, 60, 61, 69, 104, 108, 118, 129,
195, 197, 198, 213 n.10, 214 n.14,
266 n.23, 267 n.2
- Tender Buttons* (Stein), 178, 260 n.21
- Teresa of Ávilla, Saint, 90, 188,
225 n.11, 263 n.14
- Thomson, Valentine, 195, 266–
67 n.24
- Thomson, Virgil, 14, 240 n.8,
256 n.1, 257 n.11, 258 n.12
- Thoughts of an Amazon* (Barney), 7,
15, 58–59, 59 n.71, 81, 87–88, 90,
136, 218 n.10, 221 n.11, 224 nn.3,
4, 225 n.14
- “Thus Will I Speak” (Vivien), 186
- “To Helen” (Poe), 111, 235 n.33
- “To the Mothers of Future Christs”
(Barney), 77
- Toklas, Alice B., 255–56 nn.1, 3, 4,
261 n.7
- Tom Jones* (Fielding), 125
- “Tomb of Renée Vivien, The”
(Barney), 185, 263 n.6
- “Traducers” (Wickham), 150
- Traits and Portraits* (Barney),
230 n.20
- Troubridge, Una, Lady, 260 n.1
- 20, rue Jacob. *See* Barney, Natalie
Clifford, residence
- “Two Loves” (Douglas), 67, 215–
16 n.35
- Ulysses* (Joyce), 174, 177–78, 240 n.6,
257 n.9, 258 nn.15, 16
- Vagabond, The* (Colette), 151,
247 nn.2, 3
- Valéry, Paul: 5, 6–7, 9, 10, 13, 40, 44,
70, 82, 102–23, 202 n.1, 206 n.29,
215 n.32, 217 n.11, 222 n.14,
227 n.9, 229 nn.8, 13, 230–31 n.1,
231 nn.3, 4, 232 n.9, 233 n.15,
234 n.30, 235 nn.33–35, 236 n.37,
236–37 nn.46, 50, 51, 238 n.59;
and Académie-française, 46, 99,
121, 227 n.9, 229 nn.7, 8, 13, 231–
1, 236 n.37, 238 n.60; and selling
stock in artists, 13, 114–15, 117–21,
237 n.50, 238 n.57. Works: *Anne*,
109–10, 233 n.20; *Aurora*, 103,
109, 232 n.9, 233 n.20; *Evening
with M Teste, The*, 102, 105–6,
231 n.2, 233 nn.12, 14, 17; *Insua-
nation*, 103; *Narcissus*, 109, 110, 113,
119, 232 n.20; *Palme*, 109,
233 n.20; “Silhouette of a Serpent,”
113, 236 n.43; *Spiritual Crisis*, 104;
Young Fate, The, 40, 103, 206 n.30,
231 nn.1, 5
- Van Dongen, Kees, 46, 208 n.6
- “Vanquished Woman” (Vivien), 184
- Verlaine, Paul, 144, 244 n.4, 259 n.20
- Vichy-Chamrond, Marie Anne de, 49,
210 n.2
- Vigny, Alfred de, 33, 61, 203–4 nn.8,
9. Works: “Anger of Samson, The,”
59, 213 n.12; *Eloa*, 33, 204 n.9;
“House of Berger, The,” 59, 61
- Villon, François, 93, 144, 226 n.8
- Vivien, Renée, 9, 34, 35–36, 41, 184–
90, 205 n.15, 206 n.31, 233 n.20,
252 n.3; and Natalie Barney, 2, 4,
14–15, 16 n.8, 204 n.12, 205 n.16,
218 n.21, 266 n.9, 234 n.23,
243 n.1, 260 n.1, 262 n.1,
263 nn.4, 6; and religion, 186–88,
263 n.9; and Salomon Reinach,

- Vivien (*Continued*)
 184–86, 262 n.2; and Violet Shil-
 leto, 186, 187, 206 n.32, 262 n.1,
 263 nn.7, 9, 12. Works: *Etudes and*
Preludes, 34, 204 n.12; “Locasta,”
 187, 263 n.11; “My Victories,” 184;
 “prophecy,” 187; “Thus Will I
 Speak,” 186; “Vanquished Woman,”
 184; *Woman Appeared to Me, A*,
 262 n.1; *Woman of the Wolf, The*,
 254 n.2
- Voltaire, 51, 211 n.14
- “Vowels” (Rimbaud), 178, 259 n.20
- “Walk, The” (Wickman), 146–48
- Walpole, Horace, 49, 210 n.2
- “Water Pipe” (Stein), 175–76, 257–
 58 n.11
- Well of Loneliness, The* (Hall), 4
- Wickham, Anna, 11, 15, 144–50,
 244 n.1, 245 n.7. Works: “Artificial-
 ity,” 245 n.6; *Contemplative*
Quarry, The, 146; “Contrast, The”
 150, 246 n.16; “Definition,” 148–
 49, 245–46 n.14; “Envoi,” 146;
 “Fresh Start, The,” 149–50; *Little*
Old House, The, 146; *Man with a*
Hammer, The, 146; “Nervous Prostr-
 ation,” 148; “Traducers,” 150; un-
 titled poem, 150; “Walk, The,”
 146–48
- “Widow’s Jazz, The” (Loy), 160,
 251 n.3
- Wilde, Dorothy (Dolly), 90, 202 n.2,
 225 n.12
- Wilde, Oscar, 2, 9, 13, 20, 31, 90,
 199 n.1, 220 nn.1, 2, 216 n.35,
 225 n.12, 239–40 n.4, 245 n.4,
 250 n.1; *Ballad of Reading Gaol,*
The, 254 n.6
- Willy, 246 n.1, 247–48 n.8
- “Witness, The” (Lenéru), 194–95
- Woman and the Feeling of Love in*
Works of Remy de Gourmont
 (Escoube), 50
- Woman Appeared to Me, A* (Vivien),
 262 n.1
- Woman of the Wolf, The* (Vivien),
 254 n.2
- “Woman Who Lives with Me, The”
 (Barney), 15
- Wood, Thelma, 254 n.1
- Wreckage, The* (Baudelaire), 33,
 203 nn.5, 6
- Wuthering Heights* (Brontë), 126, 128
- Young Fate, The* (Valéry), 40, 103,
 206 n.30, 231 nn.1, 5
- Yourcenar, Margaret, 242 n.1
- Zangwill, Israel, 7, 76–77, 219 n.6,
 219–20 n.9
- Zola, Émile, 4, 5

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