

ANDRÉ MALRAUX AND HIS SEARCH FOR MAN'S REALITY

---

918

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Department of Foreign Languages

and the Graduate Council

of the

Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

---

by

Merna Joanne Butterworth

July 1968

13  
Approved for the Major Department

Minnie M. Miller  
Approved for the Graduate Council

James L. Boylan



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer wishes to express her sincere gratitude to Dr. Minnie M. Miller of the foreign language department for her valuable suggestions and consideration during the writing of this thesis.

M.J.B.

## PREFACE

The search for an acceptable definition of man's reality began very early in André Malraux's life. Already in La Tentation de l'Occident, published in 1926, he had stated the central problem:<sup>1</sup>

La réalité absolue a été pour vous (European man) Dieu, puis l'homme; mais l'homme est mort après Dieu, et vous cherchez avec l'angoisse celui à qui vous pourriez confier son étrange héritage.

It was Nietzsche who had first used the ambiguous expression "God is dead." Here, Malraux was simply echoing what many other thinkers had stated. By the nineteenth century scientists no longer evoked God as an explanatory principle in any scientific account. Gradually, Man, in order to know what to do, had come to consult his scientists for an explanation of the events of his natural or social life.

Malraux went a step further in the twentieth century when he stated that just as man's faith in God had died, man's faith in Man had died, partly because of the failure of his scientists to answer his questions and partly because these very sciences seemed to add to the problems of man's reality.

---

<sup>1</sup>André Malraux, La Tentation de l'Occident (Paris: B. Grasset, 1926, pp. 174-75, cited by William Righter in The Rhetorical Hero, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 12.

Behind Malraux were centuries of puzzled speculation about the reality of man. The re-formation of the question, "What is man?" had been the obsession of French moralists from Montaigne to the present day. But the Europe that surrounded Malraux in his youth was disillusioned with Man. The Great War of 1914 left behind it a bitter Europe. The young Malraux searched for another world and believed that he had found it in his Asian studies.

With his existentialist contemporaries, Malraux talked about the possibility of creating man's reality through deeds. But Malraux knew that action without clear purpose is absurd. Gradually, he came to believe, like the ancient tragedy, that the basic struggle of each man is to comprehend the meaning of his life. And so, like so many French writers before him, he chose for his quest the absolute potential or reality of man.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the words and actions of the characters in Malraux's novels to demonstrate that their evolution from novel to novel records a dynamic effort to apprehend from within the reality of man in all its totality. The view that man is what he does is present; but under this, pushing at the surface of man's consciousness, is the knowledge that man is more than his actions, his creed, or his being as judged by other men. There is a mysterious force in man, a potential reality felt but incapable, as yet, of being expressed.

While following the characters of the novels through the evolution of Malraux's thought, we are caught up in Malraux's desire to find the continual and permanent reality of man.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BIOGRAPHY OF ANDRÉ MALRAUX . . . . .	1
II. <u>LES CONQUÉRANTS</u> . . . . .	18
III. <u>LA VOIE ROYALE</u> . . . . .	28
IV. <u>LA CONDITION HUMAINE</u> . . . . .	36
V. <u>LE TEMPS DU MÉPRIS</u> . . . . .	46
VI. <u>L'ESPOIR</u> . . . . .	51
VII. <u>LES NOYERS DE L'ALTENBURG</u> . . . . .	60
VIII. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	66
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	69

## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHY OF ANDRÉ MALRAUX

Georges-André Malraux was born in the Montmartre section of Paris on November 3, 1901. His father's family was from Dunkerque and had followed seafaring trades. Louis Malraux, his great-grandfather, had died at sea. Alphonse-Emile, the grandfather, was a master cooper and outfitter.<sup>1</sup> His father Georges-Fernand Malraux, had a business at Suresnes, near Paris, and also speculated on the stock market.<sup>2</sup>

Sometime before World War I, Malraux's parents separated. The young André went to live with his grandmother in the Parisian suburb of Bondy, a mile or two north of the capital. He attended the Lycée Condorcet and the Institut des Langues Orientales where he studied archaeology, Sanskrit, and Chinese.<sup>3</sup>

He was too enterprising a youth to be comfortable in

---

<sup>1</sup>W. M. Frohock, André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Langlois, André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, "The Remarkable Life of André Malraux," Saturday Review, April 27, 1968, p. 21.



any schoolroom. Malraux himself has said that he did not study very hard. He has also stated that he did not enjoy his youth. "Je n'en avais pas," he declared.<sup>4</sup>

By the time he was sixteen he had decided to become a writer. He began to frequent the quays and secondhand bookshops, seeking bibliophilic treasures.<sup>5</sup> His studies finished, he went to work in the art department of the publisher Simon Kra.<sup>6</sup>

Beginning in 1920, Malraux contributed articles to several little avant-garde literary reviews. In 1921, Simon Kra published the first of Malraux's fiction which appeared as a separate work<sup>7</sup> entitled Lunes en Papier, it was a surrealistic fantasy, illustrated by the Cubist artist Fernand Léger.<sup>8</sup>

Malraux also became a frequent guest at dinners and art exhibits arranged at studios or art galleries of certain painters. At one of these gatherings he met Clara Goldschmidt, the daughter of a wealthy German-Jewish family. They were married a year later.<sup>9</sup> Although Clara was six years his

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Langlois, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>C. D. Blend, André Malraux: Tragic Humanist (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1963), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Langlois, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>Collins and Lapierre, loc. cit.

Indochina we see the beginning of Malraux's search for the interests.<sup>10</sup>

The couple lived with Clara's parents, and Malraux turned to speculation on the Bourse.<sup>11</sup> However, he also spent hours with his friend Louis Chevasson in the Trocadéro Museum, looking at a model of the Khmer temples of Angkor Wat.<sup>12</sup> Malraux was convinced that many temples had not yet been discovered in Northern Cambodia. Finally, at the age of twenty-three, he set out with his wife and Chevasson, carrying an official archaeological assignment from the French government and 40,000 francs, on a twenty-eight-day voyage to Indochina.<sup>13</sup>

The reasons for Malraux's trip to Indochina have been much debated. Charles Blend has stated that Malraux "went to the Orient to rid himself of the academic mentality and the concept of the human personality held by Europeans."<sup>14</sup> Germaine Brée has agreed that in "Malraux's early life we see a movement of revolt and flight, a rejection of Post-War Europe made him ill-at-ease."<sup>15</sup> In his decision to go to

---

<sup>10</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>11</sup>Collins and Lapierre, loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>Germaine Brée, Twentieth-Century French Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 427.



Indochina we see the beginning of Malraux's search for the reality of man.

Malraux was young and imaginative. He was convinced that he knew exactly where to find archaeological treasures, and three days upriver from Pnompenh, the trio did find the temple of Bantei-Srei, exactly where they expected it to be.<sup>16</sup>

For eight days they struggled to cut away the reliefs, filling their trunks. Strapping them to their water buffaloes, they struggled back to Pnompenh. There they were arrested, and confined for several months to await trial for theft. Clara, however, hurried back to Paris, to arouse friends to help in their defense.<sup>17</sup>

On July 21, 1924, their sentence was handed down. The court gave Malraux three years and Chevasson eighteen months. They both immediately petitioned for a hearing before a Court of Appeals in Saigon in September.<sup>18</sup>

The severity of their sentences was probably legally unjustified. Malraux was heartsick at the hypocrisy of France's Indochina Colonial Administration. Those three months had a profound impact on the latter part of his life. The injustices that he witnessed regarding the under-

---

<sup>16</sup>Collins and Lapierre, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Langlois, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

privileged in Indochina had given him a new cause.<sup>19</sup>

When the appeal trial reduced Malraux's and Chevasson's penalty to nine months of suspended sentences, the two sailed home in the winter of 1924.<sup>20</sup> But Malraux and his wife were back in Saigon in mid-February, 1925.<sup>21</sup>

Malraux had abandoned archaeology for politics. He had come back to Saigon to organize a new daily newspaper, l'Indochine, with capital raised in Paris from the many groups, both French and Vietnamese, that were agitating for political reforms in the colony. During the next year he went to and from China, he helped to organize the Jeune-Annam movement, and became a commissar for the Kuomintang -- the nationalist political party of China -- first in Indochina, then at Canton.<sup>22</sup>

L'Indochine enraged the other Saigon newspapers. The paper was harassed by the colonial police and its employees and the suppliers were threatened. Finally, in August, 1925, the Saigon government banned l'Indochine and padlocked its print shop.<sup>23</sup>

With the greatest difficulty, Malraux managed to put

---

<sup>19</sup>Collins and Lapierre, loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Langlois, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>22</sup>Blend, loc. cit.

<sup>23</sup>Collins and Lapierre, loc. cit.

together a new press using makeshift parts. The type for the press was purchased in Hong Kong. Thus it was that l'Indochine was re-born, christened l'Indochine enchaînée,<sup>24</sup> early in November, 1925. Meanwhile, Malraux had decided to return to France "in order to make a series of speeches aimed at provoking Frenchmen. . . in order to obtain the freedom sought by the Vietnamese."<sup>25</sup>

Malraux's La tentation de l'Occident appeared in June, 1926, a few months after his return from Asia.<sup>26</sup> The book consists of sixteen letters supposed to be exchanged between two young men, one European, the other Chinese who are traveling at the same time in each other's hemispheres. Many critics observed later that this small book announces many of the themes that are prominent in Malraux's later novels.<sup>27</sup>

In 1927, in the essay, "D'une jeunesse européenne," Malraux deals at greater length with some of the main themes of La Tentation de l'Occident. W. M. Frohock is one of those critics who sees in both La Tentation and the "Jeunesse" essay the themes of Malraux's later works. "All that needed to be done was to establish the relationships between the

---

<sup>24</sup>Langlois, op. cit., pp. 156-159.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Hollander, (trans.) The Temptation of the West (New York: Random House, 1961), p. vii.

themes and to find the people to incarnate them." <sup>28</sup>

In 1928, Malraux touched up a short tale that he had started before his first trip to Indochina. It was published as Royaume farfelu. It is a fantastic tale of strangely violent men, but the dream world is geographically identifiable as the Orient. The tale was completely dwarfed by the appearance that same year of the first of Malraux's novels that was to brand him a writer of first rank, Les Conquérants. <sup>29</sup>

The central event of this novel is the great Canton strike and with it a whole world of professional revolutionaries, drifters, terrorists and Chinese pacifists, all seen through the eyes of an unnamed European coming to Canton to work for the propaganda division which directed the strike. There are many who have argued that Malraux could not have possibly been in Canton at the time of the strike. Walter Langlois has proved that Malraux did visit the city a very short time afterward during his trip to Hong Kong to purchase type for his Saigon paper. Moreover, Malraux, through his connections with the Kuomintang party was assuredly receiving day-by-day accounts when he attended the January, 1926, Kuomintang Congress in Hong Kong. <sup>30</sup>

Although Les Conquérants was written as a sort of

---

<sup>28</sup>Frohock, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 25-26.

<sup>30</sup>Langlois, op. cit., p. 214.



diary, Malraux managed to move back and forth between violent action and extreme intellection. During the lulls between crises the characters and those who watch them analyze their actions and motivations.<sup>31</sup> In these analyses Malraux's characters are searching for reality in their lives and we see them gradually realize that political theories put limits on man's potential reality.

This technique was continued in Malraux's second novel, La Voie royale, published in 1930. However, Malraux abandoned the political setting and deepens the overtones of personal tragedy. Drawing on his experiences of his archaeological expedition, Malraux tells an exotic story of two obsessive men who fight a losing battle against the perils of the jungle and their own psychological problems.<sup>32</sup> Both Perken and Claude, in seeking for archaeological treasure, are actually seeking a more complete understanding of themselves. They seek to add to their reality, for the world has not always appreciated them or their potential.

In 1933, La Condition humaine, the last work of fiction that Malraux was to draw from his experiences in Asia, "burst like a bomb on the literary scene, and reorientated the novel."<sup>33</sup> The book won the Goncourt Prize and made its

---

<sup>31</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>33</sup>Brée, loc. cit.

author the hero of Paris society.

The action of the book focuses on the Chinese civil wars of 1925-27 and Chiang Kai-shek's savage repression of his one-time Communist allies in Canton and Shanghai. The list of characters is even more international than those of Les Conquérants. Also there are two women characters, although they are not of major importance in the plot.

The early 1930's saw the emergence of totalitarian national states on the European continent itself. Malraux was involved with a group in France that were outraged by the trumped-up charges leveled against the Communist Dimitrov by the Nazi Party. In January, 1934, Malraux went to Germany to deliver a petition to Hitler.<sup>34</sup> He also attended the first Moscow Writer's Congress of 1934, where he found himself plunged into controversy over the role of the writer as an individual in collective societies. It was ironic that just as Malraux's novels, regarded as proponents of the Communist ethos, reached their zenith of influence in France, Malraux was severing his links with the Party.<sup>35</sup>

It was also during the early thirties that Malraux and his wife Clara separated. They had one daughter, Florence, who still remains a close confident of her father.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Goefffrey H. Hartman, André Malraux (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1960), p. 98.

<sup>35</sup>David Cate, Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1960 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 242.

<sup>36</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 17.

In 1935 Le Temps du mépris appeared. In it Malraux attained complete simplicity; there is one plot and everything focuses on one character named Kassner, a prisoner in a Nazi prison. In the Preface to this work Malraux attempts to define his conception of fiction which later critics have likened to that of Greek tragedy (man, the crowd, human destiny) and Malraux emphasizes the need to understand and use art to "attempt to give man a consciousness of their own hidden greatness."<sup>37</sup>

Frohock has suggested, however, that Malraux was attempting to find the place of literature in a collective society. In any case, Le Temps du mépris is the only one of Malraux's books to have circulated freely in the Soviet Union, apparently because it is the least "corrupted" by what the Communists call "bourgeois" philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

In July, 1936, Franco landed from North Africa intent on destroying the Spanish Republic. Malraux crossed the Pyrenees two days after the fighting started and offered himself to the Republicans. The Republic could not raise an army to stop Franco in a few days, but Malraux could raise an air force to check Franco's columns. Malraux started with transports of the Spanish domestic airlines. Next he located

---

<sup>37</sup>Pierre Eugene Brodin, "André Malraux," Encyclopædia Britannica (Chicago: William Benton Publishers, 1967), XIV, 708.

<sup>38</sup>Frohock, op. cit., p. 94.



six ageing French military planes. For mechanics, Malraux had to use Communist worker-volunteers; for pilots he hired mercenaries. Thus the Air Force of the International Brigade was created. Malraux flew sixty-five missions, sometimes as pilot.<sup>39</sup>

One by one the planes were lost. Malraux tried and failed to find replacements in France. In a final effort to help, Malraux turned to his writing and published in 1937 his longest novel, L'Espoir, as a possible way to enlist the world to rally to the Republicans' cause.<sup>40</sup> The book was also made into a movie, with a cast of Republican fighters, but this was not shown until after the Second World War.<sup>41</sup>

L'Espoir presents the men and ideologies that suddenly found themselves allied in a struggle to preserve human freedom. The subject makes major differences from the earlier novels necessary. Here, most of the time, the event dominates the private destinies. The book has many loose ends, and its diffuseness is partly due to its length and its many characters. The title can be explained by noting that it appeared when the Republic still seemed to have a chance. In L'Espoir, Malraux's major themes of human dignity, human freedom, and human fraternity are

---

<sup>39</sup>Collins and Lapierre, loc. cit.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>41</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 35.



taking firm shape.

From the experience derived from making the motion picture, Malraux wrote another book, his Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma. Written in 1939, it was not published until after the Second World War.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 left no doubt in Malraux's mind that his dream of approaching internationalism was dead.<sup>43</sup> At thirty-eight, Malraux was too old for the Air Force, so he enlisted in the tank corps. When wounded he was taken to a prisoner of war camp at Sens, but he escaped.<sup>44</sup> Disguising himself as a carpenter, he walked the eighty miles to unoccupied France. While recuperating there, he wrote his last novel, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, the first in a trilogy that he entitled La Lutte avec l'ange. Unfortunately, the Gestapo later found and burned the two remaining manuscripts.<sup>45</sup>

In this novel the experiences of his past twenty years come into focus. Malraux here states that man has imprisoned his own potential reality. Here, also, is seen man's inherent potential for greatness.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>44</sup>Caute, loc. cit.

<sup>45</sup>Collins and Lapierre, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>46</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 36.

Malraux was soon a part of the Résistance as head of 1,500 maquisards in the mountains. On D-Day, his unit was assigned to disrupt the transport of twelve German divisions south of the Loire river. His Résistance career was ended, however, by two bullets in the leg as he fled from a German patrol. He was taken to Toulouse to be interrogated; but, due to confusion over his identification papers, he was left three weeks in prison. Then on August 20, 1944, he heard the echoes of La Marseillaise in the courtyard. The Germans had fled as his Résistance comrades approached.<sup>47</sup>

In November, 1944, Malraux was fighting in Germany in the pursuit of German troops. May, 1945, found Malraux in Nuremburg. The war was over, and he had survived. He had taken all the risks to "transform into consciousness as wide an experience as possible."<sup>48</sup>

The war had modified his outlook on life and deepened his disillusionment with Communism. When one of General de Gaulle's aides heard of Malraux's change of stance in 1945, he arranged a meeting of the two men. A friendship of over twenty years began at that meeting.<sup>49</sup>

Many expressed surprise at finding Malraux in General de Gaulle's camp. Malraux replied that he had not changed,

---

<sup>47</sup>Collins and Lapierre, loc. cit.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

but that the Communists had. Malraux became Charles de Gaulle's Minister of Information in October, 1945 and in January, 1946, he followed his leader out of office. A year later he helped create the Rassemblement du peuple français (RPF). In 1951, the parliamentary elections showed the party to be one of the two strongest parties in France.<sup>50</sup> But the party became increasingly conservative and General de Gaulle retired. Disgusted, Malraux also returned to private life. His wife Clara had died during the war. Also his second wife Josette Clotis had been killed in an accident at the train station during the winter of 1944, leaving him with their two sons, aged ten and eight.<sup>51</sup>

He retired to his home in Boulogne, married his half-brother's widow, Madeleine, and began to write again. The result was three immense books on art and art history.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1947 and 1950, Malraux published the three volumes of his La Psychologie de l'art, the first of which he entitled Le Musée imaginaire. Sometimes called a psychology, though much of it concerns metaphysics, and sometimes called an essay, when it often reads like poetry, it is the beginning of a series that has already made Malraux one of the world's outstanding art critics.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

Malraux took to his bed with a serious reoccurrence of tropical fever in 1950, but still in 1951 appeared another huge book on the philosophy of art. Les Voix du silence denies the idea that cultures grow old and die just as any life cycle in the natural world. The argument is a series of propositions, ending with the proposition that art shows human history not as a fatality, but as a flow of creative powers absorbing and transcending circumstance.<sup>54</sup>

The first volume of Malraux's next art series, La Métamorphose des dieux appeared in 1958. Sometimes classified as a metaphysics of art, it is a study of the mythical motifs in art. Malraux's desire for precision of expression led him to supplement the text with a table of the book's principal ideas.<sup>55</sup> These ideas can be closely associated with Malraux's themes in his last novel, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg.

Also in 1958, Charles de Gaulle again took office when the Algerian crisis threatened to end the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle appointed Malraux Minister of Information, but the position was only temporary, for with the birth of the Fifth Republic Malraux became Minister of Culture, a post uniquely designed for him.<sup>56</sup>

Since Malraux has been Minister of Culture he has

---

<sup>54</sup>William Righter, The Rhetorical Hero (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 34.

<sup>55</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>56</sup>Collins and Lapierre, op. cit., p. 60.



brought loans of great art to Paris and sent the Venus de Milo to Japan and the Mona Lisa to the United States. He commissioned Chagall to paint the ceiling of the Paris Opera and reorganized the French theatres. He demanded funds from the National Assembly to clean the public monuments and buildings, a program which will be finished in 1969. He renovated the Louvre, arranged social security benefits for artists, and his ministry has begun a hundred-volume catalogue of all France's treasures, complete with photographs.<sup>57</sup>

During all this frantic planning, Malraux has continued to advise President de Gaulle and served as his envoy to President Kennedy, Premier Nehru and Mao Tse-tung.<sup>58</sup>

In the Fall of 1967 a thunderous acclaim greeted the publication of the first of four volumes of Malraux's autobiography, entitled Antimémoires because "il répond à une question que les Mémoires ne posent pas, et ne répond pas à celles qu'ils posent."<sup>59</sup> The first 200,000 copies were gone from the stands in only three days. Malraux has said that the last volume will be published only after his death.<sup>60</sup>

Antimémoires is not an ordinary autobiography. Malraux

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> André Malraux, Antimémoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1967, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> George Steiner, "André Malraux, a Gaul for All Seasons," Life, May 24, 1968, p. 93.

circles his life and that of his contemporaries in whom he finds history embodied. Significant portions of the book are taken directly from earlier works or are collages of episodes. Characters of earlier works re-enter the book in a dialogue with their creator.<sup>61</sup>

The narrative closes with a triple symbol. Malraux visits the caves of Lascaux with their prehistoric wall paintings. The visit causes him to remember the Résistance living underground, himself in the cellars of the Gestapo and paleolithic man creating and transmitting by the strange method that Western man calls art.<sup>62</sup>

Malraux has stated that because of the perfection of photographic techniques, the fine arts have found their printing press. Now man is no longer confined to his corner in time and space but can regard the whole range of human accomplishment. Because art has a paradoxical capacity to live far longer than the artist or the civilization in which it had its first meaning, Malraux has turned to art to find the links to man's total reality.

---

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### LES CONQUÉRANTS

In the Postface of the 1949 edition of Grasset of Les Conquérants, Malraux called this first novel the book of an adolescent.<sup>1</sup> It is true that Malraux was only twenty-four years old when this novel was published and that his ideas regarding metaphysics were not yet completely formed. However, technically speaking, Les Conquérants<sup>2</sup> was a success. The book's narrowing focus, rapid pace, and extremely immediate imagery are achievements that Malraux could not have bettered.<sup>3</sup>

In Les Conquérants, Malraux's basic material came from his experiences in the Orient between 1925 and 1927. The novel begins with a wide scope, describing the whole play of the revolution in Southeast Asia, but the focus narrows until in the third and last part, Pierre Garine, revolutionary, fills the whole scene.

Malraux chose to tell the tragic story of Garine through the eyes of one of Garine's friends. This unnamed

---

<sup>1</sup>Frohock, op. cit., p. 47, citing 1949 edition by Grasset of Les Conquérants.

<sup>2</sup>André Malraux, Les Conquérants (New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1928 by Bernard Grasset in Paris), 245 pp.

<sup>3</sup>Frohock, op. cit., p. 41.

strike, which Garine is directing, as the Commissaire de la Propagande for the Communists.

We do not meet Garine until the beginning of the second part of the narrative but already we know his life story. Malraux has described Garine to his readers by allowing them to listen to the European friend discussing Garine with others as he travels by boat to Singapore, then to Hong Kong, and finally up the river to Canton. The reader is given a complete police report on Garine as the narrator mentally corrects or adds to the report. By this technique Malraux has thoroughly prepared us to meet Garine, while building the suspense. The use of the present tense and a first person narrator also add to the sense of realism.

We learn enough from the police report about Garine to know that he is good material for a psychological study. He is the son of a mixed marriage; his father is Swiss and his mother a Russian Jewess. Of his childhood nothing is mentioned; but, by the time he is twenty, he is listed as an accomplice to an anarchist plot. Garine, however, is not an anarchist. He has no faith in any ideologies. What attracts him to the meetings of the socialists and anarchists is the atmosphere. He often ridicules these men and their ideas but their ferment, their drive to change things by force, draws him like the moth to the flame. Garine craves power for its own sake, not for wealth, notoriety, or respect it



might bring. Neither is he interested in reforming society.

Garine is endowed with high intelligence. He can speak German, French, Russian, and English and has inherited a considerable fortune from his mother, but he does not take advantage of these assets. He finds himself in serious trouble with the law while still a university student. He is accused and tried for his complicity in several illegal abortions. He has contributed the money which the pregnant women themselves can not afford. Here for the second time we see Garine's contradictory character. Although he does not admire the anarchists' ideas, he attends their meetings. Although he knows that his part in the abortions was illegal, he is amazed that such a matter is brought to court. Still worse, this meaningless trial, which never seems to mention the actual facts, can actually deprive him of his freedom. Besides being contradictory, Garine seems to have difficulty in understanding his own reality and the realities of the world in which he lives.

Garine is granted a reprieve, but no feeling of gratitude to a kind fate enters his thoughts. Society is stupid, incapable of improvement because it makes no sense. He feels that no one should expect him to be grateful that he is freed, when he feels that he should have never been arrested nor tried in the first place.

In August, 1914, Garine enlists in the French Foreign Legion. Knowing that Garine cannot tolerate systems, has

no faith in ideologies and that he does not believe that society is worth reforming, we are not surprised that he deserts early. He deserts one day because the knives that are issued to the troops have chestnut-wood handles just like ordinary kitchen knives. Again, his idea of what war weapons should look like does not match the reality of his experience.

Having gambled away his inheritance and being forced to find employment, he becomes a translator for a pacifist publishing firm in Zurich. There he falls in with a group of Bolshevists. The confused doctrine of the Bolshevists disgusts him, but he is fascinated by their passion for the revolution that they feel sure will soon begin in Russia. Again Garine does not see the paradox of his position. As a completely asocial person, a social revolution in Russia has little to do with him. When the Russian Revolution actually starts he is disgusted (again, belatedly) that he has squandered his fortune and has no means to go at once to Moscow. He is further disgusted by the neglect of his Bolshevik friends and their lack of zeal in finding a way for him to join them. It apparently never occurs to him that these men, obsessed as they were by their social ideas, would naturally not be overly-anxious to be joined by a man who does not share their visions.

But Garine is offered a part in another revolution when he receives a letter from Lambert, a former schoolmate who has joined Sun Yat-sen in China. Lambert forwards

the passage money, and Garine goes to Marseilles to embark.

As Garine saunters through the streets of Marseilles with a friend, speaking of himself and his motivations, he is beginning to see himself. He explains that he is going to help the oppressed in China because he must be involved in a struggle. It is not that he loves the oppressed; when they have triumphed, he will probably hate them. He knows that he will be in trouble again if he stays in Europe. Europe is controlled by bourgeois laws and values, and there is no acceptance of a man such as he is. He is a man who has no sense of reality if he is not living a conflict. "Je veux -- tu entends? -- une certaine forme de puissance; ou je l'obtiendrai, ou tant pis pour moi"(p. 65). Garine needs conflict as the rest of us require water or air for life. When his friend asks him what he will do if he fails to find this conflict Garine answers: "Si c'est manqué, je recommencerai, là ou ailleurs. Et si je suis tué, la question sera résolue"(p. 65).

Some critics complain that Malraux's characters are not well drawn. Claude-Edmonde Magny stated in her essay that Malraux never developed a character who changed and grew. She complained that the Garine in China rediscovered by the narrator in Les Conquérants was the same as the Swiss student accused of complicity in the abortion

case.<sup>4</sup>

It is probably expecting too much, however, to find a more objective Garine in China. He had left Europe because he could not find a reality there that he could accept, and how much more difficult it would be for him to sort out the truth about himself in a foreign culture, while working under the continuous pressure of directing a revolution. There is also the danger that, as readers, we expect the characters to find, in themselves, the peculiarities that we can see so clearly. Garine does express doubts about himself, his role in life, and his motivations during his hospitalization for a recurring tropical disease. The doctor tells him that he will die if he does not return to Europe immediately and Garine admits that he knows the revolution will soon have no need for him. He says to his friend, the narrator, "Ah! cet ensemble insaisissable qui permet à un homme de sentir que sa vie est dominée par quelque chose" (p. 153).

Here is a man who has dedicated his life to seeking power, realizing that he still feels like a puppet, being manipulated by an unknown, unknowable force.

When Garine has recovered sufficiently to resume his work, he is enraged when he investigates a report and finds

---

<sup>4</sup>Claude-Edmonde Magny, "Malraux the Fascinator," translated from the French by Beth Archer, essay in Malraux: A Collection of Critical Essays, R.W.B. Lewis, editor (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 128.



that four of his men have been tortured to death. But later, after arranging for the removal of the bodies he speaks of Klein, one of the slain men: "Pauvre type! . . . Il disait souvent: la vie n'est pas ce qu'on croit. . ."(p. 187).

Remembering this expression of Klein's causes Garine to reflect on the reality of his own life. He returns to his lack of freedom. "Quand je pense que toute ma vie j'ai cherché la liberté. . . Qui donc est libre ici, de l'Internationale, du peuple, du moi, des autres?(p. 188) He remembers that the possession of power has been his prime motivation. "Pendant des années -- des années -- j'ai désiré le pouvoir: je ne sais pas même en envelopper ma vie"(p. 188). But now Garine knows that power over others brings little satisfaction when one discovers that this power does not include power over oneself or power over one's destiny.

A messenger interrupts Garine's reflections, and he must continue his work. He has made himself a conqueror, consciously sought out leadership and now, even if he has discovered the hollow reality of his life, he must continue. "Il y a tout de même une chose qui compte dans la vie: c'est de ne pas être vaincu. . ."(p. 191). But Garine is already beaten because he must return to Europe to die.

Garine is surrounded by other men in this narrative of revolution, who are also seeking their own reality. The confusion of Garine's search is repeated in the life of Hong, the terrorist, whom we see in person only once. We learn his

story, indirectly, from reports of those who know him.

Unlike Garine, Hong spent his youth completely shut in by poverty. But, although their youth was spent in very different circumstances, both Garine and Hong are alike in that they both detest order. Hong detests order because it represents contentment with the status quo. He is furious with those who forget that this life is all that we have. He does not expect to find any good in the future and he does not intend to exchange his thirst for vengeance for any idealistic hope of a better world. He cannot think of a future as other men because the experiences of his youth have utterly disgusted him with the happiness and self-esteem of the well-to-do. Having no aspirations for a better future, the present has become his entire reality. Because of his complete preoccupation with this present life and his difficulty in thinking in future terms, Hong has never felt the fear of death. ". . . il n'est jamais parvenu à comprendre pleinement ce qu'est la mort; même aujourd'hui, mourir n'est pas pour lui mourir, mais souffrir à l'extrême d'une blessure très grave. . ."(p. 29).

As Hong works for the revolution his unstable emotional balance becomes more evident. His hatred of the oppressors of the poor has twisted his mind so that he sees himself as the avenger of all mankind. He must kill those who preach patience, kill those who procrastinate, kill those who are weak, make excuses, or try to impose restrictions.

Garine realizes that Hong can no longer be controlled and must be killed as a mad dog is put out of its misery, but he will not allow Hong to be tortured. He comments sadly: "Il est peu d'ennemis que je comprenne mieux. . ."(p. 141). But Garine must order Hong's execution as Hong cannot be controlled.

The radical opposite of Garine and Hong is represented in the novel by Tchen-Dai, a most influential man in Canton, the leader of the revolutionary right. His whole life and his entire fortune have been spent in trying to free Southern China from British domination. But unlike Garine or Hong, he hoped to achieve his ends by non-violent means. When Tchen-Dai pleads with the terrorists and communists not to resort to violence, he is unsuccessful, then he threatens to commit suicide, knowing that his people respect him and those who urge violent means will surely find their projects paralyzed.

Tchen-Dai is an atheist; thus does not expect any heavenly reward for his endeavors. He has consistently turned down political positions in the party, not wishing to assume any political power. The only motivation in his life has been a dream of a reborn China, and he is willing to give his death to the cause, also.

Of course, Garine hates this idealistic man and fears him. He explains that Tchen-Dai now lives for protest instead of victory. He has spent so many years defending

and directing an oppressed people that he has unconsciously arrived at a new reality. According to Garine then, Tchen-Dai believes himself to be an instrument dedicated to achieving victory for the Chinese people when he is actually an instrument for protest only. Tchen-Dai cannot see his own reality because his idealism gets in the way. The unfortunate man is killed by the terrorists, and his death only serves his opponents.

The tragic implications of the characters in Les Conquérants have been noted. This novel is populated with men who are searching for an understanding of themselves. They are engaged in a violent effort to change the historical destiny of China but inwardly they are seeking their own reality, an insight that defines man as a being, either as he is or as he could be. It is disquieting to realize that these men have no pat answers for the people that they lead. But while they do not offer complete answers, their search is not fruitless. Garine, in spite of all his talks about the absurdity of society, has worked to give the Chinese masses a consciousness of their right to human dignity.



### CHAPTER III

#### LA VOIE ROYALE

In his second novel, La Voie royale,<sup>1</sup> Malraux abandoned political questions and the rapid short scenes of the journalistic report. He limited his characters to two. The setting is Cambodia that he knew from experience.

The sudden opening of the book is characteristic of Malraux and puts a heavy burden on the reader. This technique does give the novel the feeling of reality for there are no lapses into description, except through the eyes of the characters, as in this beginning:

Cette fois, l'obsession de Claude entraînait en lutte; il regardait opiniâtrément le visage de cet homme, tentait de distinguer enfin quelque expression dans la pénombre où le laissait l'ampoule allumée derrière lui (p. 11).

Because the introductory sentence also mentions Claude's obsession, we are warned that Claude's vision is likely to be intensely personal.

Claude is on a boat off the coast of Somaliland talking to Perken, a mysterious adventurer whom he met in a Somali brothel. We also learn that, in Claude's estimation, Perken is bitter because he is no longer young and that he is very withdrawn.

---

<sup>1</sup>André Malraux, La Voie royale (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1930), 269 pp.

Milton Stansbury has noted that, in this opening scene, Malraux shows his excellent skill in chiaroscuro. The night scene on the boat is back-lighted by a meager bulb and the silvery moonlight glistens on a black sea. No doubt Malraux was intentionally creating a striking visual image, but the dark-light background also sets the tone for the personalities of Perken and Claude.<sup>2</sup>

We learn in a flashback that Perken has agreed to join Claude on an archaeological expedition in the interior of Cambodia to search for some valuable bas-reliefs. Perken says that he needs the money and he is going that way anyway, because he wants to find a rival adventurer named Grabot.

The reader is allowed to see only Claude's mental interior until page 126. Then, in the midst of the struggle to tear away the bas-reliefs from the temple, we are permitted to see Perken's mental anguish also. He must have money in order to buy machine guns to give to some northern tribes that he has governed for years. But we still see all the exterior events and materials through Claude's eyes.

Claude's experiences are divided into two parts. On the boat he is in a state of intense anxiety because of the slowness of the ship. His dreams, memories, and hopes impose their inactive existence until he is hardly the master of

---

<sup>2</sup>Milton Stansbury French Novelists of Today (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1935, reissued in 1966), p. 215.

his consciousness. His obsession to explore and to conquer almost controls him instead of the other way around. Some passages read like a psychologist's clinical report on the state of Claude's mind.

In fact, Claude is so immersed in the dreaming brought on by repeated studies of his maps that Malraux compares the state of Claude's subconscious mind to a hostile animal that he could barely keep in check. In more lucid moments Claude realizes this and becomes still more anxious to free himself from "cette vie livrée à l'espoir et aux songes" (p. 58). His disembarkment will permit him, in his words, "agir au lieu de rêver" (p. 41).

Claude has existed on dreams so long that the dreams are nearer his reality than his life is. He knows he is in danger of losing the objective control of his subconscious, and he is frantic to get off the boat. He believes that action in the jungle will cure him.

Instead, his experiences in the jungle in Parts Two and Three of the narrative are even harder on Claude's screaming nerves and his precarious grip on reality. As Charles Moeller has said, the jungle becomes the artistic transposition of the interior state of Claude's mind. The interior jungle is the subconscious which threatens to overthrow le moi conscient.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Charles Moeller, "L'Espoir des Hommes," Littérature du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et Christianisme, Tome III (Paris: Casterman, sixth edition, 1963), pp. 158-60.

The jungle to Claude is simply a liquid marsh, all of which is non-human. After six days Claude "avait renoncé à séparer les êtres des formes, la vie qui bouge de la vie qui suinte. . ."(p. 99).

Perken and Claude have entered a world that allows man to work at only one fundamental project: staying alive. But for Claude, a novice in the jungle, the struggle to control his subconscious mind, that so exhausted him aboard ship, has followed him here.

The jungle attacks all his senses. The odor is heavy, putrid; the air corrupt. He is continuously assailed by unknown insects and he discovers that all the elements of the jungle cling to a person, so that his mind becomes almost permanently horrified. He discovers that even his physical coordination escapes his control. "Il avançait lentement, exaspéré par le peu d'obéissance de son corps maladroit" (p. 103). Above all, he discovers, in the jungle one does not trust his vision. Shadows, rays of sunshine and multi-colored reflections all confuse the eye. One sees what is not there and does not see what actually exists.

Everything human seems so incongruous in the jungle. The blows of his hammer on the stones of the ruins sound "humains et vains dans l'immense silence de la brousse. . ."(p. 122) and even his own voice surprises him seeming "criarde et désaccordée"(p. 103). He realizes that man counts for nothing here. The continual decomposition of things will



swallow up a man and his mind just as surely. The jungle's dehumanizing power causes Claude to "courir comme un homme" (p. 104) in a clearing even though he risks being whiplashed with the strands of rattan.

Thus Claude learns that the jungle holds up to man's consciousness of himself a snare no less dangerous than the depths of the subconscious. And Malraux has shown his readers that far from reflecting man's reality, nature is capable of robbing from man his very consciousness of himself.

The one reality for Perken and Claude is the possibility that the next temple or the next will contain the statues that they seek. When they do find the stones they have great difficulty in trying to remove them. Perken does not suffer from the near hysteria that Claude is experiencing. But in Perken there is an absolute unwillingness to accept physical defeat. Like Claude, Perken feels the stones of the temple to be personally hostile to him, and he loses his self-control. He, in his turn, rains furious blows against the stones, incapable of intellectual functions. In the obstinate stone he can see his men being mowed down for the lack of machine guns. Once the stones have been cut away and loaded, however, both men feel at peace. They have conquered the stones and with them the jungle. They have asserted their human uniqueness, their reality as men.

Their peace is short-lived. They cannot return the way they came because the French authorities will confiscate

the stones. Besides, Perken has still to find his friend Grabot. They must cross the hostile country toward Thailand. No sooner do they turn this direction, than they lose their native helpers.

At this point, many men would not go on. Their project seemed doomed to failure but they do go on. Perken and Claude are obsessed by death. Perken is not troubled by the idea of being killed, he has faced this danger repeatedly. What bothers him about death is that it might come as an unchosen act. The fact of man's contingency can be denied if he chooses his death. Claude would rather die than go back to his life of dreams. This reality he will not accept.

Now Perken and Claude make contact with the savage Mo's. In the second Mo's village they find Grabot, blinded and harnessed to a treadmill by his savage captors. Grabot symbolizes how this land can completely dehumanize a man. He has lost track of his reality. He cannot answer their questions, does not know who he is. When Perken and Claude bring him to their hut he continues to plod in a circle, the plodding having become his only reality.

But the Mo's have surrounded the hut. Perken, refusing to be burned alive like some nest of insects, takes a huge risk and walks out to barter with the savages. But with Perken's courageous act comes the beginning of his end. The natives accept his terms but he has wounded his knee on one of their stakes. Gangrene sets in before he can reach a

doctor in Thailand, and the doctor does not have the equipment for amputation.

Perken's reaction to the doctor's pronouncement of death is interesting. As any man would, he begins by doubting the doctor's word. He talks to a native doctor and receives the same diagnosis, which he believes.

Perken then tells a native to bring him some women. He picks one of them but finds no satisfaction in this strange woman who does not love him. He then decides that he will start for his northern tribes; at least he will choose his spot to die. This is the decision we would expect of this man who has always found his reality in action. His action in this case will only add to his pain and probably shorten his life. But he will not accept a reality he did not choose.

Even more interesting is Claude's decision to go with Perken. When Claude goes with Perken, he leaves behind his precious bas-reliefs. He has in fact renounced their importance. Claude has apparently realized in Perken's predicament something new in himself. He knows there is nothing to stop him from going on to Bangkok. Nothing, except the fact that Perken will have to make his last journey alone, remains.

The whole of Part Four is a pain-filled flight to the mountains. And then Perken discovers that his tribes have turned against him. But none of this matters now. Perken no longer belongs to the world of other men. Perken in his

pain and the loneliness of dying discovers a new part of his own reality. It seems to him that he is able to commune with himself as he could not before. He thinks of other men: "des hommes. . . ils croyaient à leur existence"(p. 265), and this thought fills him with a kind of joy. He now knows that he has not realized other men's death: "ils avaient passé comme les nuages. . . lui seul allait mourir"(p. 265). He realizes that the death of others does not teach us much about the reality of death.

Claude learns something new about the reality of himself too as he tries to comfort Perken. He learns that he has neither look, nor gesture, nor words to express his desperate feelings of fraternity. The proximity of Perken's death stands between them.

In this novel we see the step by step progression of Malraux's contention that in the reality of man's fraternal feelings, the process of the rediscovery of man is under way. At this stage it is limited to the loyalty of two men. But in his subsequent novels Malraux will return to the word fraternity.



## CHAPTER IV

### LA CONDITION HUMAINE

As a result of Malraux's voyages to Indochina early in his life, he complained that most Westerners were encumbered with traditional concepts that no longer had meaning for man nor actually represented the reality of the twentieth century.

Seeking for a way to force the reader to accept a new framework of concepts, to see reality through a new grille, Malraux chose the novel.

The evolution of Malraux's novels is actually a long query into the nature of man's reality. And it is to a nascent China, convulsed by a revolution in an attempt to define itself, that he turns next for the background of La Condition humaine.<sup>1</sup>

While the author tried to explain the essential meaning of the struggle, he engaged the reader in a deep emotional participation through the experiences of the human beings who were seeking to change the conditions of their life, to change their reality.

When the story begins, we find ourselves in a dark room in Shanghai with Tchen, a Chinese worker who is

---

<sup>1</sup>André Malraux, La Condition humaine (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Soleil, 1946), 404 pp.

about to kill for the first time. The murder of the sleeping man fills six pages, for Tchen, who had been raised by Luthern missionaries, had great difficulty in feeling his reality. The situation was so unreal to him that he gashed his own arm in order to fully realize that he must kill this man and obtain some papers from beneath his pillow. When he stabs the man he cannot believe that the victim is dead because the blow causes the man to have convulsions. Finally, Tchen is able to open his hand and he tries to realize that he is now a murderer. He feels terribly alone; separated from all other men by his deed. From this point, only destruction can give Tchen a feeling of reality, a feeling of being in accord with himself.

Tchen is possibly the most complex being in all of Malraux's fiction. He represents, among other things, what happens to the Oriental when he is subjected first to Christian ideas and then to Marxist doctrine.

When Tchen returns to Hemmelrich's phonograph shop, where he gives the papers to Kyo Gisors, one of the leaders of the Shanghai insurrection, Tchen refuses to talk about the killing. He felt that "les paroles n'étaient bonnes qu'à troubler la familiarité avec la mort qui s'était établie dans son coeur"(p. 22). Later, however, at different times, Tchen tries to explain himself and feels that he cannot, that the listener lacks the necessary experiences.

The first of these conversations is with Professor

Gisors, Kyo's French father. The elder Gisors realizes that Tchen has become fascinated by his killing and asks him if he cannot get away from the torment. Tchen answers that his torment is actually a feeling of fatality, a feeling that he is fated to be a killer. When Tchen leaves, Gisors knows that Tchen now lives "dans le monde du meurtre, et n'en sortirait plus"(pp. 75-75). Tchen has become a different being; he has found a new reality.

We recognize in Tchen, the reincarnation of Hong, the terrorist, from Les Conquérants. But we saw Hong only from the point of view of those who know him. In this novel, we are allowed to see into Tchen. In the end he hurls himself beneath Chiang Kai-shek's car in an assassination attempt.

Hemmelrich, a Belgian, who allows the Communist conspirators to meet in his shop, is a sort of foil for Tchen. Like Tchen, Hemmelrich is frustrated in his attempts to change the forces that control his life. But Hemmelrich is further hemmed in by his marriage to a timid Chinese wife and the existence of his son who is afflicted with painful mastoiditis. He has no money to provide for them if he should die so his life is simply a way to keep them from dying. Life has given him no freedom, and he is not free to die either. When Hemmelrich has to refuse Tchen his shop as a hiding place, he feels humiliation. His concern for his wife and child will not permit him even to be an accessory to the action. As Hemmelrich reviews his life, he clicks off

the events as if he were a disinterested observer --

"Mauvais élève à l'école...l'usine: Manceuvre..mauvais esprit...au régiment, toujours en tôle...et la guerre...gazé"(p. 215). Here we see that Hemmelrich has the idea of himself that he believes others to have. Some men might make a dependent wife and child their "raison d'être". Hemmelrich has added them to his list of personal failures. He does not value himself because he keeps them from dying. "C'était rien. Moins que rien"(p. 217). Weeks later, when Hemmelrich returns to his shop and finds that the police grenades have killed his family, he is filled with relief. Realizing that he is free to join the insurrection, he thinks:

Maintenant, il pouvait tuer, lui aussi. Il lui était tout à coup révélé que la vie n'était pas le seul mode de contact entre les êtres, qu'elle n'était même pas le meilleur, qu'il les connaissait, les aimait, les possédait plus dans la vengeance que dans la vie(p. 303).

Like Tchen before him, Hemmelrich has at last found his reality.

In the first scene of the novel we meet Kyo Gisors, half French and half Japanese, who represents a new character-type for Malraux. As a young Marxist, his life has a meaning and he can state it easily: to give to the men whom famine, at every moment, is killing off like a slow plague, the sense of their own dignity. His early Japanese education has taught him the "les idées ne devaient pas être pensées, mais vécues"(p. 79). Kyo introduces a heroic sense into Malraux's novels, a sense that makes him aware of the inherent dignity



of man and motivates him to fight for its restoration to those deprived of dignity. By so acting, he can find his own reality and refuse to accept the absurdity of man's condition.

Kyo is also unique in Malraux's novels in that he has a wife and the two have apparently found some strength in one another. Each is more fully himself through the love they share. This is why Kyo is hurt by May's confessed infidelity, even though he had granted her sexual liberty according to his Marxist ideas. He learns too late that he cannot give such freedom when his being is so tied to hers; by granting her this freedom he alienates himself. Unfortunately, the rapid pace of events does not give May and Kyo time to talk out this problem. Malraux does show that May understands the depth of their relationship, for she insists on risking her life with Kyo, because the discovery of their oneness, reinforced by their will, is more important to her than her value to the Communist Party.

At the end of the book, Kyo makes a last discovery about the reality of his life. He discovers, as he lies in the schoolyard prison among all his men who are about to die, that by the way he has lived, he has given meaning to his death. "Il mourait, comme chacun de ces hommes couchés, pour avoir donné un sens à sa vie"(p. 362).

Just as Kyo was more conscious of his reality through his relationship with May, Kyo's father maintained his only tie to reality through his son.

Professor Gisors is no longer interested in his own life, and he escapes his reality in opium. But he loves Kyo so deeply that he is tortured by Kyo's commitment to a life of action in which he cannot participate. Gisors is wise enough to know that one can never know another human being completely. "La réalité, c'est l'angoisse d'être toujours étranger à ce qu'on aime"(p. 286).

But though Gisors believes that the world is without inherent reality, he believes that all men have an intense reality. Ironically then, when searching for a way to obtain Kyo's release from prison, Gisors must ask the one man whom he feels has no reality, baron Clappique.

Baron Clappique is a degenerate aristocrat.<sup>2</sup> He wears a black silk patch over his right eye and talks with a stutter. He makes a living by his connections, his antique business, and his business deals which are almost all illegal. We first meet him at the Black Cat Bar where he is entertaining a group of prostitutes with his weird stories. We learn that Clappique is a victim of mythomania. He escapes his reality through his overgrown imagination.

Clappique had previously helped Kyo trick a ship's captain into moving his ship, so that the Communists could raid the ship and steal its cargo of armaments and ammunition. Clappique's part in the scheme has been revealed to the police, but a dishonest policeman on the force warns Clappique

---

<sup>2</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 27.

to get out of Shanghai or he will be arrested.

Clappique does not have enough cash, and so he appeals to Kyo. Kyo promises to bring to the Black Cat Bar whatever he can get. Meanwhile Clappique learns that the Communist Party headquarters have been surrounded by police. He must warn Kyo and May when they come with his money not to go there.

Clappique goes upstairs to the gaming tables to while away the few minutes before his appointment with Kyo. But his mythomania grips him, he stays and plays, using part of his passage money and by missing his appointment with Kyo, so loses not only the rest of his passage money but Kyo's life as well.

At the roulette table, Clappique assumes another identity, another reality which is a regular occurrence with him. He sees "une espèce de dieu; et ce dieu, en même temps, était lui-même"(p. 288).

He loses and has to go back to his room to contemplate his predicament. He is startled when Professor Gisors arrives and asks him to go to see Koenig, the chief of Chiang's police. Clappique realizes, with relief, that Gisors does not know that he, Clappique, is responsible for Kyo's being caught.

With Koenig, we meet still another individual seeking to escape his reality. Koenig, a German, is a man who cannot live with the memory of his former humiliation, at the hands

of some Red Guards, who tortured him when he tried to escape from a prisoner's camp in Siberia. He tries to purge himself of humiliation by telling how he cried like a woman in front of his torturers. But he cannot escape his own idea of himself and so he lives to kill as many Communists as he can.

"Je ne revis comme autrefois, comme un homme...que quand on en tue"(p. 318). He feels his reality as a man, only when he kills.

There remains in this cosmopolitan melting pot called Shanghai one more character whom Malraux described at length. The antithesis of Kyo is Ferral, a French financier, who is trying to turn the events of the insurrection to the advantage of his Franco-Asian Consortium, an international business. Like Kyo, he is a man who believes in action. But Kyo's life of action is based on an idea of furthering human dignity. Ferral, in contrast, is interested in amassing personal power. Once he said to Gisors, "Ne trouvez-vous pas d'une stupidité caractéristique de l'espèce humaine qu'un homme qui n'a qu'une vie puisse la perdre pour une idée"?(p. 270) Gisors does not answer the question directly, but he thinks of his son Kyo.

Another contrast between Ferral and Kyo is in their relationship to women. Instead of the growing understanding between Kyo and May we read the account of the relationship between Ferral and Valérie, his mistress. In a bedroom scene we learn that Ferral is a man in search of his reality also.



Unfortunately, Ferral's will to power, his intense belief that he is more of a man because he has more power, prevents him from giving any part of himself to a woman. Valérie learns this when Ferral will not allow her to turn off the bedlight, and she also understands that he wants to use her, like a mirror, in order to see his power over her reflected in her face. Valérie resents this deeply. She feels that she is not being treated as a human being. He denies her reality.

Ferral wants a reality larger than being a man; he wants to be a sort of god, able to feel himself in the role of both the possessed and the possessor at the same time.<sup>3</sup>

When Valérie humiliates him by making him wait for her and arranging it so the men in the lobby of her hotel would observe Ferral's predicament, he angrily chooses a Chinese courtesan, knowing that he could humiliate this courtesan by treating her as a common prostitute. He knows, as he arrives at his apartment, that sleep is his only peace. He lives, he fights, he creates but, deep down, "Il retrouvait cette seule réalité, cette joie de s'abandonner soi-même...cet être, lui-même, dont il fallait chaque jour réinventer la vie"(p. 274).

The last part of the novel is filled with the details of Ferral's destruction. He must go to Paris and ask for money to enable his Consortium to adapt to Chaing Kai-shek's

---

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, op. cit., p. 28.

victory. His future is completely in the hands of the ministers, and this places him in the humiliating situation in which he has often placed others. The ministers turn down his request.

There is a strong feeling at the end of the novel that Malraux wishes his readers to compare the end of Kyo with the end of Ferral. The keynote of Kyo's death is fulfillment. He has lived and died in an attempt to secure dignity for his fellowman. Ferral has lived to be defeated and to seek ceaselessly his own reality, as he is unwilling or unable to accept and glorify the reality of other men.

## CHAPTER V

### LE TEMPS DU MÉPRIS

Like La Voie royale, Le Temps du mépris<sup>1</sup> recounts a struggle on the part of man to hold to his sense of his own reality. But in La Voie royale the struggle is caused by the presence of a strange, unknown world; and, in Le Temps du mépris, the struggle is caused by the absence of the real world altogether.

The Préface to this work is important because in it Malraux defines his idea of the purpose of fiction. He was seeking to compromise the artist's freedom to create with collectivist aesthetics. He writes that the artist must cultivate his difference but maintain his communion with the group. "Il est difficile d'être un homme. Mais pas plus difficile de le devenir en approfondissant sa communion qu'en cultivant sa différence"(pp. 12-13). The interesting phrase here is "de le devenir". Malraux implies that man is capable of becoming more than he is, to find a new reality. This theme becomes more evident in his later novels.

Le Temps du mépris is so short that it has been called a novelette. Malraux has limited the plot to focus the attention on Kassner, a Communist agitator and the only character,

---

<sup>1</sup>André Malraux, Le Temps du mépris, (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1935), 185 pp.

who has been captured by Nazi SA men.

As the story opens, Kassner is being interrogated by his captors. The Nazis are not sure that they have the man known as Kassner and they are studying a picture of him which is, luckily, not very recent.

When the name Kassner is mentioned, all the heads at the desks in the room look up, and Kassner knows for the first time what his reality means to his Nazi enemies.

As Kassner waits for the Nazi officer to examine his papers, he mentally reviews his life, wondering how much of it the German is reading too. This mental review gives us the opportunity to learn that Kassner is a multi-experienced, highly educated person.

Finally, the Nazis decide to put him in a cell. They are not sure of his identity. In the cell Kassner's mind whirls, trying to adopt a new idea of himself. He knows the Nazis will torture him and he must separate his mind from his body, forget his own reality, so that he will not reveal information which will damage his cause or endanger the lives of his comrades. Thus he will show to his torturers not the resistance of one who has something to hide but the passiveness of an innocent victim. He meditates:

Il fallait fuir dans une passivité totale, dans l'irresponsabilité du sommeil et de la folie; et cependant garder l'affût d'une pensée assez lucide pour se défendre pour ne pas se laisser détruire là irrémédiablement(p. 36).

Thus, Kassner embarks on a gamble. He must assume another reality. His mind must ramble into a world of unreality,



disassociated from his real life and meaning. Still he must remain in control so that he does not lose his mind entirely.

The cell is dark, and he hears screams and moans. Time is passing but he cannot gauge the time because all exterior clues are absent. His life is now "Une vie toute en sons et en bruits hostiles comme une vie d'aveugle menacée"(p. 39).

The menacing sounds continue. He hears choked yelps, then metal clanging. Four SA men enter, carrying a lantern. Kassner is brutally beaten until he is unconscious and thrown into another cell.

When he regains consciousness, his shoelaces, suspenders, and buttons have been torn away so that he cannot commit suicide. He has no reality shut in this dark hole, but he cannot die.

As Kassner struggles to maintain his sanity, he discovers that he is not alone. With him are his memories and dreams, his imagination and his involuntary reflexes. Worst of all, he discovers some of the monsters of his subconscious self. The reality of a human being is incredibly complex.

In his tormented imagination, he sometimes hears music or voices. He feels that his wife is dead. He turns to childhood memories, but they become hallucinations. He tries to control the music in his thoughts but "la musique à la fin surmontait son propre appel héroïque comme elle surmontait tout"(p. 59). His worst problem is his loss of a sense of time. He becomes "un étranger au temps"(p. 6).

As Kassner finds it almost impossible to maintain control of his hallucinations, he is jerked back to his reality by a tapping on his wall. Another prisoner is trying to communicate. He tries to decipher the code but he has no paper or pencil and his mind refuses to record the taps. When the tapping stops, he believes he must have invented it all. He loses his mental control again. He tries to organize his thoughts by organizing his "mémoire désagrégée"(p. 70).

He tries to think of a way to kill himself. He can sharpen his nails on the wall and open a vein in his arm. But his nails are not long enough yet. He realizes that nature has fashioned his body to protect him from himself. His reality is enclosed in a cage of bones and flesh.

The tapping begins again. This time he understands the code. The message "Genosse (Comrade). Prends courage. Tu peux..." is cut short. No doubt the guards have discovered the man tapping and dragged him away. He has given his life for a moment's fraternity.

Kassner returns to his dreams. When the guards come to get him he cannot sort out reality from dreams. "Les objets vivaient de toutes leurs dimensions, pesaient de tout leur poids; mais ils n'étaient pas réels"(p. 116).

Kassner is stupified to discover that he has been in prison only nine days. "La réalité était comme une langue oubliée. . . (p. 124).

The Nazis explain that Kassner has been arrested so he

is free to go but must leave Germany immediately. Kassner realizes that someone has given his reality in exchange for his own.

Kassner returns to his wife in Prague. Together they try to realize that his safe return is true.

At the end of the novel Kassner has determined to go back to Germany. He knows that, if he is caught again, nothing can save him. But now he understands the importance of fraternity in his survival as a human being. This value has become his reality.

## CHAPTER VI

### L'ESPOIR

In the midst of Malraux's participation in the Spanish Civil War, he took time to write L'Espoir<sup>1</sup> and to direct a movie made from the text.

The novel, published in 1937, was the first notable novel about modern mechanized civil war. The Republican Air Force that Malraux had organized had run out of planes. Malraux hoped to rally world opinion to the side of the Republicans in Spain by the sale of his book. He also made a trip to the United States and Canada to make lectures regarding his experiences in Spain.<sup>2</sup>

As a war novel, the book confronted the author with the standard difficulties, plus a few special problems. He had to concern himself with the experiences of the war, but he wanted to present its political and metaphysical meanings as well. Hence, critics have often criticized his too thoughtful heroes who seem to alternate unrealistically between heroic action and deep introspection. The critics were also

---

<sup>1</sup>André Malraux, L'Espoir (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1937, Le Livre de Poche edition printed by Brodard et Taupin, 1960), 498 pp.

<sup>2</sup>Janet Flanner, "Profiles: The Human Condition II," The New Yorker, November 13, 1954, p. 54.



uncertain as to how to interpret Malraux's political attitudes as expressed by the more than fifty characters in the book. Indeed, the characters themselves seemed to be aware that there were too many sides to the question for any political ideology to be acceptable.

Today, more than twenty years since the appearance of the novel the more recent critics are agreed on one point: the major purpose of the book was not political propaganda.<sup>3</sup> Most critics also agree that Malraux chose a zone where human beings were suspended between life and death in order to write about and describe the problem of the definition of man.<sup>4</sup>

"It is in L'Espoir," writes Victor Brombert, "That Malraux's sense of conflict between being and doing finds its clearest and most artistic formation". Brombert goes further and divides Malraux's basic thesis into three parts: (1) the conflict between intellection and action, (2) the problem of the intellectual forced to take sides, when neither side is absolutely right, and (3) the intellectual's search for a synthesis of the man who asks questions and the man who suppresses all questions by a series of actions.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Blend, op.cit., p. 117.

<sup>4</sup>André Rousseaux, Littérature du vingtième siècle, (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1939), p. 51

<sup>5</sup>Victor Brombert, The Intellectual Hero, 1180-1955, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1960), p. 174.

The thoughtful heroes of L'Espoir are not like the heroes of old who fought for a king's right to rule or a religion's divine glory. These men are seeking the awareness of Man's reality (or potential reality) that comes in the midst of suffering. André Maurois expressed this when he said:<sup>6</sup>

"Sous des apparences diverses, les héros de Malraux ont toujours été à la recherche de ce Graal: l'Absolu. Quelque chose ou idée complète de soi, inébranlable, à quoi l'individu flottant et transitoire puisse se raccrocher".

Each of the characters in L'Espoir is seeking to justify his action metaphysically within some system that defines but does not limit man as a being.<sup>7</sup>

The action of this book is narrated in vivid but brief truncated episodes. But Malraux knows that the pure act is blind. The act's validity derives from some certain qualities of the actor himself.<sup>8</sup> And since Malraux's search is to find the meaning of man and define his reality, he chooses intellectuals as actors. Everything that happens is seen through the eyes of one or more of these intellectuals who have lost faith in the values of ideas as such and have come to distrust the pure exercise of the mind. But while

---

<sup>6</sup>André Maurois, De Proust à Camus (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1965), p. 316.

<sup>7</sup>Wallace Fowlie, Climate of Violence (New York: The

<sup>8</sup>Righter, op. cit., p. 8.

they have chosen to take part in the action, their minds continue their habitual involvement with ideas. Thus after each burst of action, we read a philosophical or political conversation, each one centering on a different topic and each time shuffling the participants.

The first of these men who can be called a major character is Manuel, the Communist organizer. He is first seen at the switchboard of the Worker's Union in Madrid the night that the insurrection begins in Spain. Later we see him fighting in the Sierras, west and south of Madrid. He and his comrades are successful in stopping a Fascist armoured train. Afterwards, Manuel goes to the emergency hospital, which has been set up in a nearby village, to see Barca, one of his valiant comrades who has been severely injured in the battle. Manuel knows that Barca was simply a trade-unionist before the outbreak of the revolution, and not a militant. Therefore Barca was not in any immediate danger from the Fascist take-over. He knows too that Barca has had little formal education, therefore his reasons for joining the fight were probably not the same as his own. Curious, Manuel asks Barca why he did not remain neutral. Barca refuses the question at first, because he does not feel that he has the big words that Manuel's formal education has supplied him. "Mais j'ai réfléchi", he says, "Pas comme toi,

peut-être. Je peux apprendre ce que je \* sais pas; mais comprendre ce que je suis, ca!...C'est les mots...Tu me suis?"

(p. 97) Encouraged by Manuel's interest, Barca continues.

"Ils veulent qu'on les respecte, et moi je \* veux pas les respecter. Parce qu'ils ne sont pas respectables"(p. 98).

And then there is another aspect of the Fascists he cannot tolerate. "Quand, nous, on veut faire quelque choses pour l'humanité, c'est aussi pour notre famille. C'est la même chose. Tandis qu'eux, ils choisissent, tu me suis? choisissent"(p. 98).

Barca goes on to say that he understands the motto of the French Revolution. Equality is not enough. He wants fraternity as well in Spain.

Manuel is impressed by this uneducated man's ability to express his hope for a change in man's reality.

Another example of the motives that have caused men to decide to fight is given us in the conversation between García, a university ethnology professor, who is now serving with the Intelligence division and Hernández, who is in charge of the Republican forces at the siege of Toledo's Alcázar. Hernández is an idealist who assumed that his side stood for the improvement of mankind. But, as the siege drags on, he sees himself forced to drop his humanitarianism in

---

\*Barca, as some who lack formal education, has omitted part of the negative.



order to win. He is perplexed. What is to be gained in this fight if he must become just like his enemy, or even worse, in order to win over him? He discusses this point with García, but he receives no solace. García tells him that he is trying to link the aim of the revolution to a moral purpose. "Le perfectionnement moral, la noblesse sont des problèmes individuels, où la révolution est loin d'être deux, pour vous, hélas -- c'est l'idée de votre sacrifice"(p. 213). García was right, unfortunately, as later we see Hernández, having remained in Toledo with his men and refusing to save himself, meet his death in front of a Fascist firing squad. He thus obtained the nobility that he sought. In García, Malraux describes the intellectual who knows that, however unworthy it is of man, the world forces man to choose between gross oversimplification of good and evil. But García also believes that to refuse this choice can be even worse treason.

We see this in a later conversation between García and Dr. Neubourg concerning Miguel de Unamuno, a world-renowned professor of the University of Salamanca who has retreated to his bedroom and refuses to support either the Republic or the Fascists. He has heard of the atrocities on both sides and feels that he cannot, in good conscience, choose either party. García and Dr. Neubourg agree at the end of their conversation that Unamuno's purely ethical opposition is immoral. He has in fact turned his back on a just war because he cannot find absolute good in either army(p. 374).

In a later scene, García watches the bombing of Madrid and he says: "Comme Madrid a l'air de dire à Unamuno, avec ce feu: qu'est-ce que tu veux que me fasse avec ta pensée, si tu ne peux pas penser mon drame?"(p. 384)

Malraux furnishes still another example of the intellectual who refuses to take sides in political matters, when we listen to old Alvéar, a retired professor of art history, converse with Scali, one of the pilots of the Escadre España. Alvéar sits in his room in Madrid, as the bombs fall around him, and discusses the values that he can support. "Je veux avoir des relations avec un homme pour sa nature, et non pour ses idées. Je veux la fidélité dans l'amitié, et non l'amitié suspendue à une attitude politique"(p. 317).

And Scali agrees that in his squadron he has seen men who are joined by a common bond find greatness in themselves that they would never have found alone. "L'ensemble de cette escadrille est plus noble que presque tous ceux qui la composent"(p. 319).

Several scenes later, García and Scali again discuss the intellectual's search for absolutes and the impossibility of political theories to hold true when man tries to put them into practice. They are walking through the ruins of Madrid, alight with fires raging out of control.

Scali states that he has come to believe that the intellectual's mania for a totalitarian reality is meaningless in the twentieth century(p. 327). García agrees that

there seems to be a drastic contrast between the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Suddenly Scali asks García how a man can make the best use of his life. "García réfléchissait, --Transformer en conscience une expérience aussi large que possible, mon bon ami"(pp. 388-89).

As Charles Blend has explained, it is here that the French word conscience comes to unify the themes that Malraux has allowed his characters to voice. For the French word conscience translates into English as both "consciousness" or "awareness" and as "conscience". Man's innate consciousness of himself drives him to demand human dignity. In the process of achieving human dignity for all men, man discovers that fraternity is the essence of human dignity. But the double meaning of the French word conscience implies that genuine awareness also includes that a man listen to his conscience.<sup>9</sup>

Malraux has also discovered that there is another element in man's reality that is irreducible. It is this mysterious hope that persists in man that gives Malraux his title for the novel, and he also uses it for the title of the last fourth of the novel. This ineradicable hope is that whatever is wrong about man, whatever is unjust in his universe can be modified.

Several scenes toward the last of this reinforce

---

<sup>9</sup>Blend, op. cit., p. 124.

Malraux's choice of a title, but probably the description of Manuel's state of mind on the last page is best. Malraux wrote:

Manuel entendait pour la première fois la voix de ce qui est plus grave que le sang des hommes, plus inquiétant que leur présence sur la terre: -- la possibilité infinie de leur destin; et il sentait en lui cette présence mêlée au bruit des ruisseaux et au pas des prisonniers, permanente et profonde comme le battement de son coeur (p. 498).

Manuel hears the voice of the cosmos, or the voice of nature, in its customary, unperturable song, and he realizes that man in his ability to change has still before him infinite possibilities for a new reality.



## CHAPTER VII

### LES NOYERS DE L'ALTENBURG

The last of Malraux's novels<sup>1</sup> is by far the most complex. The very singularity of the novel is interesting. It has a first person narrator which Malraux used in only one other novel, Les Conquérants. But this time the moi is a participant. It is the only novel not based on an experience of Malraux's adulthood but goes back to his childhood. It is the only novel which limits its characters to one family. It is the only novel that uses France as part of its setting and the only one first published outside of France. It is the novel that Malraux places first in his Antimémoires, published in 1967.

This novel is by far the most revealing of Malraux's philosophy and at the same time the most fragmentary. The stages of the action cover more years than any of his novels -- from 1908 until 1940. The unity of the action has yielded to a unity of meditation. Moreover, it is here that we see the major themes of the earlier novels essentially altered. Malraux's basic scenes are present again -- the prison scene, the point of death, the exotic journey, and the vain, heroic or destructive action -- but all his material is here framed

---

<sup>1</sup> André Malraux, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1948), 292 pp.

stands that what man is must be explained by their similarities, what have become universal and eternal in them. He also realizes that he is essentially different from these men in one respect: his thoughts are directed toward comprehending the totality of what is happening in this cathedral prison. He must try to formulate "*une idée, si élémentaire soit-elle*" (p. 28) to search out a meaning to order his life. The other prisoners -- non-intellectuals -- "*vivent au jour le jour depuis des millénaires*" (p. 28).

The young Berger tells in Part I certain details of his grandfather's life. Dietrich Berger was a man dedicated to upholding human dignity and expressing fraternity. He stood outside the church to listen to the sermons because he felt that the Pope in Rome had treated him as an outsider when he visited there. He braved the anger of his neighbors more than once by insisting that outsiders be treated justly in his community. When he was ready to die, he committed suicide thereby confronting death itself by choice. On the day before he killed himself this man had stated that if he could choose some other life to live he would choose "*pas une autre vie que celle de Dietrich Berger*" (p. 87).

In the attitudes of this man we see three of Malraux's recurring themes: (1) his conviction about the absolute value of one man defending another's right to dignity, (2) his conviction that man must be allowed maximum scope for freedom and initiative, and (3) his conviction that the European attitude toward death paralyzes the will to live fully.

Part I also recounts the exotic experiences of Vincent Berger, the son of Dietrich, while serving as German ambassador to Turkey in 1908. But his political endeavors there had ended in disillusionment, and he returned home just five days before his father committed suicide.

Vincent and his uncle, Walter Berger, brother of the deceased man, discuss the suicide. This discussion gives Malraux the opportunity to express the duality of man which he would like to bridge. When Walter suggests that we never know a man because "l'homme est ce qu'il cache. . . un misérable petit tas de secrets", Vincent refutes his definition sharply. "L'homme est ce qu'il fait" (pp. 89-90).

This scene leads to Part II which describes in detail a conclave of philosophers organized by Walter Berger, which meets yearly in the priory in Altenburg. For six days the philosophers discuss "la permanence de l'homme à travers les civilisations" (p. 106). Professor Mollberg, a German ethnologist, was the principal negative speaker. In his view men have no fundamental permanence. "Ils n'ont guère en commun que de dormir quand ils dorment sans rêves, -- et d'être morts" (p. 147). Mollberg's pessimistic view that man is devoid of any kind of permanent reality is denied emphatically in the next scene. When Vincent Berger walks home after the close of the conclave, he sees some huge walnut trees. He sees in these trees the link between logs and statues. He sees in his mind the faces of saints carved

from the wood of the walnut trees and he knows the reality of man is in his capacity for change.

In Part III we find Vincent a year later, serving as a German Intelligence officer on the Eastern front in the First World War. Here he is one of the first unfortunate men to witness the German's experimental use of poisonous gas against the Russians. Fortunately, Vincent survives the ordeal and learns that, at the point when a man is dying, the fundamental reality of life seems simple. "Dans cette dévalade farouche sous le poing de la mort, il ne lui restait qu'une haine hagarde contre tout ce qui l'avait empêché d'être heureux" (p. 245).

Malraux underlines the experience of Vincent Berger by recounting in the last part of this novel, the almost identical experience of Vincent's son in 1940. The son is trapped in an overturned tank, expecting a German artillery shell to end his life momentarily. When he escapes his seemingly certain death, he has the same flash of insight into life's simple reality. Like his father before him, he looks around him and everything he sees delights him, no matter how insignificant the object seemed before. He exists in time and space but it could have just as well have been otherwise. For centuries, man has faced the awareness that the world can continue without him, and it has caused fear and horror. But this reaction causes man to be less than he can be. Man can face the feeling that he is not necessary



and regard life as an inexplicable gift. Man can accept the world when he feels its potential for change, though he is "accoté au cosmos comme une pierre"(p. 291).

On the subject of man's reality Walter Berger said:

"Le plus grand mystère n'est pas que nous soyons jetés au hasard entre la profusion de la matière et celle des astres; c'est que dans cette prison, nous tirions de nous-mêmes des images assez puissants pour nier notre néant"(pp. 98-99).

In this phrase we see Malraux's essential message. Man, even though he is mortal, contains great power. He can feel an unquenchable hope, a sense of his own value and his brotherhood with other men. But the most awesome reality of Man is his art, his mysterious power to create something more revealing and more universal than himself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

In November, 1946, André Malraux lectured at the Sorbonne on "L'Homme et la culture artistique".<sup>1</sup> At forty-six, his novels of war and revolution were behind him and his books on the philosophy and history of art were still to be written.

Man and his world were also at a point of beginning anew after two World Wars had shattered his visions of a steadily progressing humanity. No doubt many who came to listen to Malraux that day were hoping to be given a concrete system to use in order to rebuild their faith in Man, but they did not receive any pat answers.

For Malraux had decided by this time that no preconceived image of man and his place in the scheme of things can give man his necessary freedom to evolve his ultimate meaning. But if man no longer has a preconceived notion of himself, which science, reason, or religion has given him, he has something which Malraux believes to be greater: consciousness or awareness of himself.

Despite all denials that history has furnished him, man has a consciousness of his value and his potential.

---

<sup>1</sup>Blend, op.cit., pp. 12-13.

This consciousness must continually struggle against the demons that hold man's destiny captive: delusions, appearances, and servitudes. Only when man has repudiated the untruths will his blindly-fought-for reality reveal itself in an unpredictable form.

While man as yet has no absolute or total sense of his ultimate reality, he does have certain learned values which can prevent him from sliding downhill.

Malraux has spoken of these basic values in each of his novels.

In Les Conquérants and La Condition humaine, Malraux expresses through his characters the immortal value of human fraternity. Man is basically alone but he can will himself to be part of something; part of a group if he chooses. In so doing, he will learn more of his own reality.

In La Voie royale, Malraux also stresses fraternity but here the involvement is a more personal one between Perken and Claude. Each has a personal quest and in the attempt to help each other, both learn something of man's potential for self-sacrifice.

In Le Temps du mépris, Malraux allows us to see the multi-faceted human personality, which with its dreams and memories and delusions forms a whole, though largely unseen by others. Kassner is comforted and given hope by a fellow-prisoner's message. Fraternity here plays a strong role.

With L'Espoir, Malraux is ready to show that man has

certain universal qualities and one of these qualities is his capacity to hope, no matter how dark his future may seem to be. Here also, Malraux stresses the value of fraternity and the absolute requirement that man be allowed his dignity and the maximum freedom possible in order to grow in consciousness of his reality.

Finally in Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, Malraux has begun to speak of man's ability to learn from his history and the traditions of his culture. Always present also in Malraux's novels is the constant reiteration that "notre art est une humanisation du monde".<sup>2</sup>

Man then must continue to seek "une expérience aussi large comme possible"<sup>3</sup> in order to direct himself toward his possible greatness. He can learn much from artists and historians but most of all he must learn from his experiences. In his quest for his own reality he will be upheld by his own unquenchable hope and his ability to feel related to others who share his human awareness.

Man gains an awareness of his reality through his hope, his feeling of fraternity, his knowledge of history and art, and his achievement of freedom and dignity.

---

<sup>2</sup>Malraux, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Malraux, L'Espoir, p. 389.



## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. NOVELS BY MALRAUX

Malraux, André. Antimémoires. Paris: Gallimard, 1967.  
605 pp.

This is the first of four volumes of a projected autobiography. Large portions of this volume are taken straight from the novels. Included are recounts of Malraux's conversations with Charles de Gaulle, Nehru, and Mao Tse-tung.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Condition humaine. Paris: Gallimard, 1946.  
287 pp.

The story turns around the Shanghai uprising of 1927. While the Chinese and European Communist revolutionaries seize Shanghai from within, the Kuomintang army under Chiang Kai-shek advances from without. The insurrection is successful but ends in ultimate tragedy for the participants when Chiang orders the communist groups to turn in their weapons and the Communist World International refuses to support the insurrection, leaving the fighters to be executed.

\_\_\_\_\_. L'Espoir. Paris: Gallimard, 1937. 498 pp.

A vast spectacle of the many nationalities and the many loyalties attempting to direct Spain's destiny during the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The story ends in 1937, long before the defeat of the Republicans with whom Malraux sympathized.

\_\_\_\_\_. Les Noyers de l'Altenburg. Paris: Gallimard, 1948.  
292 pp.

The story of three generations of the Berger family from the province of Alsace. Because of the singular position of their province, the son finds himself fighting the Germans, and comparing his experiences with his father's experiences when fighting the French and their allies in the First World War.

\_\_\_\_\_. Le Temps du mépris. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1935. 185 pp.

Kassner, a Communist agitator, is imprisoned by the Nazis. Most of the novel is an account of his struggle to maintain his courage and sanity while awaiting almost certain torture. He is miraculously released but, even as he joyously returns to his wife in Prague, he knows that he must return to Germany where he will risk his life again.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Voie royale. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1930.  
269 pp.

Two European adventurers battle the Cambodian jungle. Claude Vannec hopes to find valuable Khmer bas-reliefs; Perken hopes to use his share of the wealth to buy weapons so that he can prevent civilized men from reaching the savage tribes over which he has ruled.

## B. OTHER BOOKS

Blend, Charles D. André Malraux: Tragic Humanist. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963. 255 pp.

Among the best works on Malraux. Contains most complete bibliography of Malraux's works published up to 1963.

Blumenthal, Gerda. André Malraux: The Conquest of Dread. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960. 154 pp.

An intensely personal attempt to define Malraux's poetic tendencies in the novels.

Brée, Germaine. Twentieth-Century French Literature. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. Pp. 427-58.

Contains an introductory discussion of Malraux's work and his impact on contemporary literature. This is followed by a chapter from L'Espoir.

Brée, Germaine and Margaret Guilton. An Age of Fiction. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957. Pp. 182-92.

Relates the heroes of Malraux's novels to the ancient tragic myths. Critical of Malraux's inspiration for man.

Brombert, Victor. The Intellectual Hero. New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1961. Pp. 165-80.

A very helpful chapter on Malraux's attempt to bridge the conflict between thought and action.

Caute, David. Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1960. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964. Pp. 237-58.

The pages devoted to Malraux's attempt to explain his break with Communism and to prove that Malraux has clearly shifted his former philosophical position.

Fitch, B. T. Le sentiment d'étrangeté chez Malraux, Sartre, Camus, Simone de Beauvoir. Paris: M. J. Minard, Lettres Modernes, 1964. Pp. 9-92.

The feeling of estrangement in some of Malraux's major characters is closely examined in this work.

Frohock, W. M. André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1952. 175 pp.

A very detailed examination of Malraux's novels, his themes, and his literary techniques.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. André Malraux. London: Bowes and Bowes, 1960. 103 pp.

A small but satisfying book which considers Malraux's works to be in quest of the idea of man.

Hatzfeld, Helmut. Trends and Styles in Twentieth-Century French Literature. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1957. Pp. 33-38.

This writer does not agree with Malraux's idea of man, but he does have high praise for Malraux's writing techniques.

Jenkins, Cecil. "André Malraux," The Novelist as a Philosopher, John Cruickshank (ed.). London: Oxford University Press, 1962. Pp. 55-75.

The author is highly critical of Malraux's association with De Gaulle. He seems to interpret this as a basic refutation of Malraux's earlier themes. X

Langlois, Walter. André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966. 230 pp.

A very readable account of the part of Malraux's life which he spent in Indochina. Much of the material is based on newspaper articles, courtroom records, letters, interviews, speeches, and magazine essays.

Lewis, R. W. B. (ed.). Malraux: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964. 173 pp.

Twelve essays on some aspect of Malraux's works, plus an introduction to Malraux and his critics written by the editor.

Malraux, André. The Temptation of the West. Trans. Robert New York: Random House, 1961.

The introduction to this book is very helpful background material on Malraux.

Maurois, André. De Proust à Camus. Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1965. Pp. 297-320.

Five chapters are devoted to Malraux's themes and his literary techniques.



Moeller, Charles. "André Malraux ou L'Espoir sans Terre Promise," in Littérature du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et Christianisme, Tome III, L'Espoir des Hommes. Paris: Casterman, sixth edition, 1963.

Gives all its attention to the problem of man's feeling of alienation in the works of Malraux.

Righter, William. The Rhetorical Hero. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964. 90 pp.

The author is a technical logician and aesthetician who performs the very important task of relating Malraux's treatment of art to the basic preoccupations that underlie all his work.

Savage, Catherine. Malraux, Sartre, and Aragon as Political Novelists. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1965. Pp. 6-16.

Chapter II, entitled "Malraux and the Political Novel," summarizes by saying that Malraux's novels, although expressly concerned with political values, in each case move toward a resolution which criticizes their very politics.

Stansbury, Milton. French Novelists of Today. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1935. Reissued in 1966. Pp. 209-220.

Although this text is dated, it is an interesting example of what critics wrote about Malraux's work before he had published his last two novels.

#### PERIODICALS

Caillois, Roger. "The Powers of Life," Commonweal, 41:390-3, February 2, 1945.

A review of Malraux's work which concentrates on Malraux's last novel, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg.

Collins, Larry and Dominique Lapierre, "The Remarkable Life of André Malraux," Saturday Review, April 27, 1968. Pp. 20-23 and 59-61.

A recent and comprehensive account of Malraux's unbelievably active life.

Flanner, Janet. "The Human Condition - Parts I and II," The New Yorker, Vol. 30, November 6, 1954, pp. 45-81 and November 13, 1954, Pp. 46-100.

Part I in this issue discusses Malraux's life and works up to and including 1934.

Part II begins with Malraux's having won the Goncourt

until the end of 1954. The most complete biographical details.

Frankel, George. "What is the Verdict on Marx?" Saturday Review, May 25, 1968, Pp. 10-13; p. 41.

A recent summation of the influence of Marx on his generation and what is left of his ideas that is valid today. Good background material before studying Malraux's early novels.

Girard, René. "L'homme et le Cosmos dans L'Espoir et Les Noyers de l'Altenburg d'André Malraux," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXVIII, 1953, pp. 51-55.

Develops the thesis that Malraux in his last two novels develops a central theme which shows man struggling against cosmic forces rather than against other men.

Steiner, George. "André Malraux, a Gaul for All Seasons," Life, May 24, 1968, Pp. 92-100.

A very good review of Malraux's life and his central values. The major part is a review of Malraux's recent autobiography.

White, Theodore H. "The Three Lives of André Malraux," The New York Times Magazine, February 15, 1953.

An interview with Malraux at the time of Malraux's first political attachment with General de Gaulle and just after Malraux had published his books on art. Malraux explains why art is important to our age.