

Patriotism and Treason in the Life and Thought of Jean Paulhan

A Thesis Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

in the Department of History

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

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## ABSTRACT

French writer, editor, and literary critic Jean Paulhan (1884-1968) stands out as a remarkably ambiguous figure in the period following the Second World War, when interpretations of the war tended to create clear divisions between resisters and collaborators. Shortly after Paris was occupied by Germany in 1940, Jean Paulhan became one of the leading figures in the intellectual resistance to Nazi occupation. During the purges that followed the war, however, he was one of the principal protectors of writers deemed collaborationist and, therefore, treacherous by Resistance writers. This thesis examines the controversial position that Paulhan held regarding the post-war purges by describing the historical context to which he was reacting, and by engaging in a close and comparative reading of three of his key texts. His two texts which deal explicitly with the purge, *Of Chaff and Wheat* and *Letter to the Directors of the Resistance*, are read alongside his key work on language and literature, *Flowers of Tarbes or, Terror in Literature*. His commentary on the purge of writers was a nexus in which his literary and political concerns were conjoined. Uniting his literary and political writings to the context of the purge was an intricate argument against the process of purification. To Paulhan, the relationship that various modern literary movements had to literature and language was based, like the post-war purge, on an ideal of purity and renewal which required a dishonest and violent association with the past. Ultimately, this thesis argues that the seemingly uncomfortable contradictions revealed in the roles that Paulhan played during and after the Occupation actually formed the core of a consistent ethical position, one that responded to a real political situation of national trauma while remaining grounded in a wider understanding of the complex relationships between literature, language, national identity and political action.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people and institutions who deserve recognition for the assistance that they gave me in completing this thesis. I am particularly grateful and pleased to acknowledge the guidance of my supervisor Professor Mark Meyers. My research was greatly helped by our discussions, the quality of his criticism, and his knowledge and generosity. I feel very fortunate to have had Dr. Meyers as a supervisor and would highly recommend him to anyone who needs supportive, intellectually astute direction for a graduate degree.

I would also like to thank Pam Jordon and Larry Stewart for serving as members of my committee. They helped by reviewing the thesis and providing valuable feedback and useful suggestions. I would also like to thank my external advisor, Ella Ophir, for her careful reading and thoughtful and insightful questions about the thesis.

I extend my gratitude for the funding I received during the completion of my Master's degree. I thank the College of Graduate Studies and Research at University of Saskatchewan for the New Faculty Graduate Student Support Award that I held for the 2007-2008 school year. I also thank the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Masters Scholarship, which I held in 2008-2009.

Finally, I thank my family for the financial, intellectual and moral support that they gave me over the last two years. They offered their help and encouragement freely and often. Their belief in my abilities helped me immensely throughout my education. I will always be grateful for their love and kindness.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### JEAN PAULHAN'S TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

It's not that I find the mystical possession of the intellectual—nor in earlier times the revolution—in the least bit contemptible. Far from it. I'm just suspicious of a revolt, or a dispossession, which comes along so opportunely to get us out of trouble.<sup>1</sup>

For a long time, particularly outside of France, writer, editor, and literary critic Jean Paulhan (1884-1968) has remained in relative obscurity, his role in the history of inter-war and occupied France (1940-44) not fully appreciated and his writings understood even less so. Perhaps the ambiguity inherent in Paulhan's life and texts explains why they have rarely been approached in an historical way. After resigning his post as editor of the prestigious *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1940, shortly after Paris was occupied by Germany, Paulhan became one of the chief directors of and fundraisers for the Resistance's publishing activities during the Nazi occupation. Later, however, he was one of the principal protectors of writers deemed collaborationist and, therefore, treacherous by the resistance writers during the post-war purges. His wartime activities thus embodied an ethical responsibility to write and fight against an oppressive power, but his post-war activities demonstrated a generous and controversial mercy for those who, through their writing, supported, and even benefited from, the occupation. Indeed, Paulhan stands out as a strikingly ambiguous figure in a period in which sharp distinctions were made between resisters and collaborators.

The limited historical studies that have been devoted to Paulhan, such as Martyn Cornick's book *Intellectuals in History: The Nouvelle Revue Française under Jean Paulhan*,

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<sup>1</sup> “Non que la possession mystique ou l’effacement du savant—ni plus haut la révolution—me semblent le moins du monde méprisables. Loin de là. Je me défie seulement d’une révolte, d’une dépossession qui viennent si bien à point nous tirer d’embarras.” Jean Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes ou La Terreur dans les Lettres*, ed. Jean-Claude Zylberstein (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 49; Jean Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes or, Terror in Literature*, trans. Michael Syrotinski (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 15.

1925-1940, tend to study Paulhan in his role as editor and neglect to engage fully with his own complex writings.<sup>2</sup> When studied, Paulhan's works have most often been analyzed by literary scholars, who aim to offer informed analysis and evaluation of the theoretical writing that he produced. Recently, two monographs explicitly concerned with Paulhan's writing have been published in English. Both Michael Syrotinski's *Defying Gravity: Jean Paulhan's Interventions in Twentieth-Century French Intellectual History* and Anna-Louise Milne's *The Extreme In-Between: Jean Paulhan's Place in the Twentieth Century* approach Paulhan as a subject of literary scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Though useful and insightful, research concentrating on Paulhan's literary merit and originality lacks an adequate historical framework for understanding the background behind his texts. Both approaches, either concentrating too much or too little on the textual aspects of Paulhan's life, fail to sufficiently appreciate the subject. To better grasp the significance of Paulhan's take on collaboration and resistance, his writings must be read closely and situated not only within the context of other texts, but also within their political, cultural and social historical context.

Jean Paulhan is widely acknowledged as the 'grey eminence' of inter-war French literature; during his involvement in the celebrated and influential literary journal *Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF)* from 1925 to 1940 he acted as mentor, promoter, friend, and faithful correspondent to a vast number and range of French writers. Similarly, through his ties with the publisher, Gaston Gallimard, Paulhan dynamically contributed to building the canon of twentieth-century French writers and artists. He was particularly able to attract, promote, and advance young authors into becoming writers of long-standing importance and value, including

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<sup>2</sup> Martyn Cornick, *Intellectuals in History: The Nouvelle Revue Française under Jean Paulhan, 1925-1940* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity: Jean Paulhan's Interventions in Twentieth-Century French Intellectual History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, c1998); Anna-Louise Milne, *The Extreme In-Between: Jean Paulhan's Place in the Twentieth Century* (London: Legenda, 2006).

Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Bataille, Francis Ponge, and Maurice Blanchot. Their rise to literary prominence was, in large part, due to Paulhan's rare vision, insightful criticism, and unfailing support. His own writings, until very recently and even within France, have been seen as subsidiary to his relationship with these other, more famous, writers. In particular, most historical studies concerning Paulhan are attempts to explain his role as editor of the *NRF*.

One such attempt at historicizing Paulhan within the literary institution of the *NRF* is Martyn Cornick's *Intellectuals in History: The Nouvelle Revue Française under Jean Paulhan, 1925-1940*.<sup>4</sup> His aim is not so much a critical survey of Jean Paulhan in his own right as it is an analysis of the development of the *NRF* under his guidance. After an overview of Paulhan's early years, and following a description of the periodical's management and composition, Cornick outlines the *NRF*'s evolving response, as a major literary journal, to various political events.<sup>5</sup> Paulhan is portrayed as attempting at first to keep the *NRF* apolitical, but gradually adopting a "balanced" approach, seeking, in each edition, to provide equal space to both sides of debated issues.<sup>6</sup> As Cornick shows, this quality largely dictated his direction of the *NRF* during a period when political and ideological controversies were rife.<sup>7</sup> The serialization of Julien Benda's *La Trahison des clercs*, André Gide's writings on the Soviet Union, articles on German culture, pieces by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and others of fascist inclination, and elements of anti-Semitism in contributions by people such as Marcel Jouhandeau were all found in Paulhan's *Revue*. In his final chapter, on the "Drift into War" (1937-1940), however, Cornick describes Paulhan's own political commitment as coming to the fore to rally the journal to the defence of

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<sup>4</sup> Other approaches that look at Paulhan in terms of his association with the *NRF* include Laurence Brisset's *La NRF de Paulhan*. Brisset focuses on the diversity of writers that Paulhan included in the *NRF*. He presents the *NRF* as something of a disinterested refuge from the political extremism of the day. Laurence Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Cornick, *Intellectuals in History*, 12-15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.

the French Republic after the 1938 Munich agreement, in clear opposition to Nazi totalitarianism. Cornick argues that this growing anti-fascism prevailed, pushing Paulhan and the *NRF* into a position of ideological commitment. By the late 1930s, the *Revue* could no longer exist as a non-partisan journal.

Cornick discerns the complex intersection of social, economic, intellectual and political discourses that Paulhan was engaged in as editor of the *NRF*. Cornick also displays an awareness of the complicated and significant nature of literary production and reception. This emphasis on the relationship between ideas and society makes clear that society (and historical context) is not a fixed entity; rather, it is a product of active creation.<sup>8</sup> Cornick impressively connects literature and society as related institutional practices which serve ideological functions. This perspective helps make conscious the ideological underpinnings of the experience of producing and responding to literature, and this perspective is important in understanding Paulhan's role in occupied and liberated France.

Nevertheless, Cornick's approach is not immune to the dilemmas of all history, limited as it is by the twin problems of "angle" and "focus."<sup>9</sup> Although he mentions a few literary texts in passing, Cornick's angle of vision tends to see only overtly political prose in the *NRF*, while shirking literature and criticism, even though the journal published abundant politically significant examples of both. Crucially, neglecting to include Paulhan's own writings (aside from a number of articles produced for the *NRF*) gives a skewed impression of Paulhan's thought and motivation. Paulhan is shown to be ringmaster frantically attempting to ensure a tenuous balance. From Cornick's study, Paulhan emerges as something of an arch-manipulator and firmly 'on the fence' of most political and social issues of the day.

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<sup>8</sup> Brian Cowan, "Intellectual, Social and Cultural History: Ideas in Context," in *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History*, eds. Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 179-180.

<sup>9</sup> David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 127.

Certainly, as the director of the left-leaning but centrist *NRF*, Paulhan practiced a studied non-partisanship in relation to political extremes. This comes through in Frédéric Badré's biography of Paulhan which distinguishes him as, above all, 'just.' Paulhan is shown as a clear and even-handed conscience negotiating the hypocrisy and contradictions of a divided France.<sup>10</sup> This is not however reducible to a position of complacency. Paulhan's publishing practice does not reveal his indifference to the various literary and political positions that he circulated within the *NRF*, nor does it indicate that he saw an equivalency between them; rather, it demonstrates a deliberate plan that cannot be grasped without an understanding of his own literary and political insights. The inclusion and careful reading of Paulhan's own writing would have resulted in a different and fairer presentation of Paulhan's ambiguous position as editor of the *NRF*. It remains to be seen how his literary achievements related to the historical contexts from which they originated. More significantly, it remains to be seen how his contributions played a part in constructing that context.

This is perhaps a consequence of his legendary discretion and self-effacing modesty. Paulhan was notoriously unassuming about his own writings, and he was not particularly interested in making a name for himself as a famous or popular author. Paulhan's style and tone of writing also differed from those with whom he might otherwise be seen as compatible. Paulhan wrote about the 'solemn' subjects of literary, philosophical, political, and linguistic theory with a beguiling airiness and humour. This refusal to use the technical language of these discourses, thus, in effect, rejecting their "discursive regimes," has often been taken as a lack of "seriousness."<sup>11</sup> However, as rabid self-promotion and not being original do not seem to be decisive factors in the continued appreciation of written texts, the marginal position that Paulhan

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<sup>10</sup> Frédéric Badré, *Paulhan le Juste* (Paris: Éditions Fasquelle et Grasset, 1996), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Syrotinski, "Interview with Mark Thwaite," *ReadySteadyBook: A Literary Site*. July 31, 2006. <http://www.readysteadybook.com/Article.aspx?page=michaelsyrotinski>. (accessed March 12, 2008).

occupies within studies of the literature and the intellectuals of the period bears further explanation.

Wlad Godzich has argued that the literary canon “is not based on the inherent formal properties of cultural artefacts but on patterns of reception and usage of these artefacts.”<sup>12</sup> As Godzich suggests, the history of literature is, in fact, not only the multiple and complex histories of its production, but also of its reception.<sup>13</sup> Certain texts are deemed of higher quality than others and granted significant status, making them worthy of preservation and study. This can be further explained through the theories of intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra. In his book *History & Criticism*, LaCapra argues that literature has been defined by “the postulates of unity, continuity, and mastery of a documentary repertoire.”<sup>14</sup> The classification of literature into genres, where multiple discrete works are put into unifying categories, disregards works that do not fit a particular pattern.

Discontinuities, gaps, ruptures, or exclusions that belie a process of the linear development, evolution, or continuity of literature have therefore tended to be historically marginalized.<sup>15</sup> Speaking of intellectual history in general, Dominick LaCapra writes that “There is at present a tendency to...downgrade the importance of reading and interpreting complex texts...whereby the significance and the specificity of interpreting complex texts is ploughed under in the attempt to reconstruct a common or collective ‘discursive culture.’”<sup>16</sup> This idea points to the possibility that more disturbing political forces are at work in the formation of canons, and, in particular, in the exclusion of Paulhan from the significant literature of his period.

Paulhan was caught in the wake of a shared repression in the literary and political world in

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<sup>12</sup> Wlad Godzich, *The Culture of Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 81.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History & Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 32.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 32-34.

<sup>16</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 67.

France during the years of occupation, collaboration and the ensuing retribution that characterised the liberation.

His writings did not fit with how events unfolded after the Second World War, where a new generation of ‘committed’ and ‘engaged’ writers, most prominently represented by Jean-Paul Sartre, emerged at the expense of older, and often tainted, writers.<sup>17</sup> During the purge, the prevailing view of literature held that writing is an act that demands the writer’s commitment to his or her time and thus engages his or her responsibility and culpability. There was a straightforward understanding of the relationship between the author’s intention and its effect on readers. Writing was therefore seen as a direct cause of predictable action. The stance on literature that Paulhan took after the war by trying to protect blacklisted collaborationist writers from the literary purge relied on quite a different conception of the writer’s responsibility than that which underlay the justification of the purge.

Readers of his writing have characterized Paulhan’s stand against the purge as demonstrating a slide to the Right or, alternately, as involvement in an intellectual and pedantic game. Paulhan’s preoccupation with linguistics has frequently been interpreted as indifference to the historical and political reality of his time, as taking refuge in literature in order to avoid political commitment. Paulhan has been consistently collected into the derided “art for art’s sake” crowd, which, as Gisèle Sapiro states, holds a number of claims: “that literature is a game, that it is its own purpose, that it should not be judged on extraliterary criteria such as ethics or politics, that it should not be held responsible for social troubles.”<sup>18</sup> Pierre Assouline’s presentation of Paulhan in his book *L’Épuration des intellectuels* is representative of the common way in which

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<sup>17</sup> Margaret Atack, *Literature and the French Resistance: Cultural Politics and Narrative Forms, 1940-1950* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 19-22.

<sup>18</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, “The Writer’s Responsibility in France: From Flaubert to Sartre,” *French Politics, Culture and Society* 25, no.1 (Spring 2007): 6.

Paulhan's argument is reduced.<sup>19</sup> He writes that what drives Paulhan in his attitude is a certain idea of literature: "The rest (the duty of the writer, political commitment,...) is only epiphenomenal."<sup>20</sup> Alice Yaeger Kaplan reduces Paulhan's motivation to one of corporatist solidarity with writers: "Whatever one might think of a particular writer, when a writer's life is in danger, fellow writers must band together to save him."<sup>21</sup> Jeannine Verdès-Leroux has dismissed Paulhan's political writing as "nothing more than a not very funny game...[and a] very weak joke."<sup>22</sup> Paulhan's arguments are often seen to overvalue the aesthetic merits of literature and devalue its political and social effects. The literary critic and historian of ideas Jeffrey Mehlman speciously presents Paulhan, alongside writers like Maurice Blanchot and Paul de Man, as an element of the "politics of collaboration."<sup>23</sup> He argues this within a larger critique of deconstruction, where he alleges the political irresponsibility of critics who assert the indeterminacy of meaning. These superficial or even defamatory interpretations of Paulhan's post-war position satisfy neither the historical circumstances surrounding Paulhan's arguments nor their intellectual rationale.

Though actively engaged in the crucial debate about the relationship between literature and political commitment of the 1940s in France, Paulhan's position was, and has remained, undervalued. This is perhaps because it did not fit with the prevailing postwar political climate in France. The purges were as much about setting the agenda of the newly established postwar regime as they were about coming to terms with the immediate past. Following Liberation, the

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<sup>19</sup> Pierre Assouline, *L'Épuration des intellectuels* (Paris: Complexe, 1996), 88.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 90. "Le reste (devoir de l'écrivain, engagement politique,...) n'est qu'épiphénomène." My translation.

<sup>21</sup> Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial & Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 200.

<sup>22</sup> Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, *Refus et violences: politique et littérature à l'extrême droite des années trente aux retombées de la Libération* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 407-408.

<sup>23</sup> He does so by juxtaposing and misrepresenting phrases in Paulhan's texts. Neither does he acknowledge that, significantly, while both Blanchot and de Man published in pro-fascist journals before and during the Nazi occupation of France, Paulhan consistently acted against fascism. Jeffrey Mehlman, "Writing and Deference: The Politics of Literary Adulation," *Representations* 15 (Summer, 1986): 5.

French use of myths of anti-fascism and national resistance played a large role in the reconstruction of France and in shaping the nation's memory of the war years. What has come to be known as the Gaullist myth, in particular, set the terms that characterized the remembrance of the Occupation of France. This interpretation held that the Vichy state that was created in southern France collaborated only passively, reluctantly and half-heartedly with Nazi Germany.<sup>24</sup> Collaboration was therefore seen as limited to a fringe group and the Germans were said to have been driven out of France by a nation of resisters.<sup>25</sup> The Resistance character has most often been described as a righteous blend of defiance and idealism; conversely, the collaborationist character has most frequently been portrayed as an amoral mix of compliancy, weakness, and expediency. Paulhan's non-partisan (but certainly not un-opinionated) position upsets the neatness of this binary. Paulhan's behaviour and thought during and after the occupation did not neatly fit into either of the categories of resister or collaborator, patriot or traitor.

In the early 1970s, notably following the publication of Robert Paxton's groundbreaking work on Vichy, the Gaullist myth was exploded.<sup>26</sup> Greater attention was given to the importance of the Jewish experience in France, the extent of collaboration, French Fascism, and divisions within the Resistance. Paxton's argument is that Vichy's collaboration with Germany was a voluntary program entered into by the Vichy government, not forced upon it by German pressure. Vichy France was therefore not a "shield" protecting true France from further damage, nor was it

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<sup>24</sup> In May 1940, after a battle that lasted only six weeks, France suffered a disastrous military defeat. An armistice was signed with Germany on June 22, and the North and West of France, including Paris, was occupied by Germany. In the unoccupied zone, an ostensibly independent French government, headed by Marshal Philippe Pétain, installed itself in the town of Vichy. Though Vichy was ostensibly the capital of the whole of France, the German occupation authorities severely limited its government's authority outside the unoccupied zone. In November 1942, following the Allied landings in French North Africa, the Germans overran the "free zone," applying a more direct hand in Vichy affairs. At Liberation, support for Vichy was considered tantamount to collaboration with Germany.

<sup>25</sup> See Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) for an excellent summation of historiographical issues and developments in the study of this period.

<sup>26</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Knopf, 1972).

engaged in a “double game” with Germany. As France has slowly come to terms with the history of that period, and especially with the ambiguity of the stances and actions that people held before, during, and after the war, the space for a proper re-evaluation of Paulhan and of his place in twentieth century France has emerged.<sup>27</sup>

With Michael Syrotinski’s *Defying Gravity: Jean Paulhan’s Interventions in Twentieth-Century French Intellectual History* readers should be able to grasp the importance of Paulhan’s writings.<sup>28</sup> Focusing on a few texts ‘read well,’ Syrotinski looks at Paulhan as a writer, giving equal weight to the arguments presented in his texts and to the literary devices that form them.<sup>29</sup> As Abigail Williams argues, attention to aesthetic qualities must be paid so as not to merely pillage texts for their philosophic or historic content.<sup>30</sup> The content or ideas of a book cannot be separated from the writing style that forms them. Syrotinski’s study makes evident that Paulhan’s texts cannot merely be reduced to their arguments; indeed, he reveals that the arguments within the texts cannot be properly grasped without paying close attention to the ways that Paulhan uses language.

Syrotinski warns that we must be attentive to “[Paulhan’s texts’] doubleness or duplicity, to the ‘second’ book hidden within the first one, to the literary performance which displaces and rewrites the critical statement.”<sup>31</sup> Paulhan, who regularly referred to himself as ‘the grammarian,’

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<sup>27</sup> See Henri Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991)

<sup>28</sup> Before writing this book, Syrotinski was the translator of some of Paulhan’s texts, most notably *The Flowers of Tarbes or, Terror in Literature* and *Progress in Love on the Slow Side*, a collection of short fictional tales. The knowledge and appreciation of the nuances and relations within and between Paulhan’s texts gained from the close reading necessary for good translation is apparent in *Defying Gravity*. Jean Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*; Jean Paulhan, *Progress in Love on the Slow Side*, trans. Michael Syrotinski (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1994)

<sup>29</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Abigail Williams, “Literary and Intellectual History” in *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History*, eds. Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 51-52.

<sup>31</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 21.

was a notoriously playful and mischievous writer. His writing is characteristically ambiguous.<sup>32</sup> He loved all sorts of games, including the games one plays with language, and this comes through in the light-heartedness of his writing and thinking generally. By suggesting that we must comparatively and patiently read Paulhan, Syrotinski takes to task scholars who either ignore his complex texts, excluding them from the historical record, or read them in a reduced manner and thereby misrepresent them. His approach is in contrast to most contemporary readings of Paulhan's texts which tend to erase what is, to Syrotinski, the "radical un-decidability which is their very theoretical foundation."<sup>33</sup>

Syrotinski's study is best at connecting Paulhan's own texts to one another and detecting similar themes shared between them. Paulhan was an extremely eclectic writer, by turns an ethnographer, a short story writer, a literary reviewer, an art critic, and a political polemicist. Syrotinski's focus on the interconnection between Paulhan's different writings reveals a common and profound fascination with language. He convincingly argues that the relationship between language and thought, and between literature and meaning, recurs in different guises in all of Paulhan's writings. One cannot hope to understand Paulhan the member of the Resistance who 'resisted' the purge of collaborationist writers after the war, without understanding his, at first, seemingly unrelated theories of language.

In particular, Paulhan's interest in Malagasy proverbs can be described as the genesis of all his later thinking on language and literature. John Culbert, for instance, argues that "Madagascar was a beginning in many respects for Paulhan, and the context from which he drew a lifetime of work and reflections."<sup>34</sup> Paulhan had an early interest in literature and philosophy. His father, Frédéric Paulhan, was a well-known philosopher at the time, and his blend of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>34</sup> John Culbert, "Slow Progress: Jean Paulhan and Madagascar," *October* 83 (Winter, 1998): 79.

philosophy and psychology influenced Paulhan's early writings. Paulhan also studied philosophy and literature at the Sorbonne. After this, during the years 1908 to 1910, Paulhan was stationed in the French colony of Madagascar as a secondary school teacher of a variety of subjects, including history, French, Latin, and gymnastics. During this time, he became increasingly critical of colonialist arrogance, and he spent less time with fellow French officials and more time with indigenous Malagasy friends.<sup>35</sup> He set about learning Malagasy; in fact, he was the only French person to successfully pass all the language exams at the time. Especially interesting to Paulhan were the *hain-teny*, traditional oral debates rich in proverbs. Success in these debates was to a large extent determined by the strength and aptitude of the contender's use of proverbs. As an outsider, Paulhan found these proverbs, and especially their use as artillery in arguments, incomprehensible and resistant to interpretation. His experience with these proverbs instituted a lifelong quest for "the secret of language."<sup>36</sup>

During his stay in Madagascar, he collected over three thousand Malagasy proverbs. In 1913, after returning to France, he translated, introduced, and published a selection of 153 *hain-teny* as *Les Hain-Teny Mérimas. Poésies populaires malgaches (The Merina Hain-Teny: Popular Malagasy Poetry)*. At first he tried to understand these proverbs by classifying them into eight distinct categories, such as love, morality, and pride. He soon became dissatisfied with this

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<sup>35</sup> Paulhan's stance regarding French colonialism is another instance of his ambiguous thinking and hard to place status. In some respects, Paulhan's attitude went against the grain of French colonial discourse. For example, during his time in Madagascar, he encouraged indigenous language and did not see the need to impose French language instruction. In fact, he tried to assimilate himself to Malagasy language. He was conscious of the injustices of the colonial relationship. For instance, Paulhan levelled a critique against the concept of the cultural hierarchy of logical and pre-logical civilizations held by the noted sociologist and anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who had once been his teacher. Paulhan shows in his essay "La "Mentalité primitive" (Primitive Mentality) that the differences between the two are entirely relative and actually reversible. In the 1950s, however, he steadfastly opposed Algerian independence, again gaining the ire of many contemporary writers. John Culbert recognizes some of the links between Paulhan's thinking on the colonial experience and his reaction to the purges. Especially relevant is his discussion of Paulhan's short story *Aytré que perd l'habitude* (1921) which recounts a French military convoy escorting three hundred Senegalese women across Madagascar. Culbert's reading reveals the "ambivalences and contradictions of his political conscience." Culbert, "Slow Progress: Jean Paulhan and Madagascar," 79.

<sup>36</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 5.

methodical codification, acknowledging a failure to take into account the way in which a *hain-teny* can lend itself to different categories and the nature of their composition and reception. His essay “*L’Expérience du proverbe*” (The Experience of the Proverb) written in 1913, repeatedly revised, and only published in 1925, was another attempt to understand these proverbs.<sup>37</sup> In it, Paulhan’s initial frustration in not being able to use the proverbs is replaced by a frustration in not being able to understand *why* he was eventually able to use the proverbs successfully. As Denis Hollier writes, Paulhan “ended up finding himself in the (to him uncomfortable) position of a sorcerer’s apprentice, using proverbs quite brilliantly, whereas he had not advanced so much as one iota in analyzing how they function.”<sup>38</sup> Paulhan eventually accepted the proverbs as both stabilized and unsettled, or as, at one and the same time, “strictly formalized expressions and vehicles for time-honoured truths.”<sup>39</sup> Culbert writes that “the ‘experience’ at issue... is the mysterious conversion by which word becomes idea, and idea word.”<sup>40</sup> This, to Paulhan, was an experience common to all language; he remarked that “there is no need to go to Madagascar to experience the proverb.”<sup>41</sup> His explorations of Malagasy proverbs also revealed to Paulhan that a common investment in language is what binds people together, but that this bond is always at risk of coming undone. As we shall see, this points towards the major concerns with language and social arrangement that he pursued in all of his subsequent thinking, including his thinking about the purges.

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<sup>37</sup> As well, Paulhan worked on a doctoral dissertation, directed by Lévy-Bruhl, concerned with the *hain-teny* for more than twenty-five years but which was never completed. He also gave a significant lecture to the College of Sociology about his experience with the proverbs called “Sacred Language” (*La Langage sacré*) on May 16, 1939. Paulhan was one of the chief supporters of the College of Sociology, and published Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois, and Michel Leiris in the *NRF*. “The Experience of the Proverb,” *On Poetry and Politics*, ed. Jennifer Bajorek, Eric Trudel and Charlotte Mandell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008, 5-27); Jean Paulhan, “Sacred Language,” *The College of Sociology, 1937-1939*, ed. Denis Hollier, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988), 306- 321.

<sup>38</sup> Denis Hollier, “Introduction to Sacred Language” in *The College of Sociology, 1937-1939*, 305.

<sup>39</sup> Culbert, “Slow Progress: Jean Paulhan and Madagascar,” 83

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Paulhan, “Sacred Language,” 317.

Literary scholar Anna-Louise Milne also sees Paulhan as engaged in a prolonged investigation of language. Her book, *The Extreme In-Between: Jean Paulhan's Place in the Twentieth Century*, is based on the careful reading of a range of Paulhan's key texts, including expressly political tracts, articles he published in the *NRF*, and his work on proverbs in Madagascar. Milne, like Syrotinski, fruitfully reads these discourses together, finding a definite strain running through them all, but she is also careful to preserve their differences. She demonstrates how Paulhan's ideas changed over time and within different circumstances. She therefore conceives of his thought, not merely as a set of conclusions, but as a dynamic process responding to concrete problems and changing situations.<sup>42</sup>

Milne contends that all of Paulhan's studies were inspired by a concern to understand what literature offers to society. Milne understands Paulhan as a creator and inhabitant of the space 'in-between' art for art's sake and art as politics. She convincingly argues that Paulhan ultimately saw literature as a space where "the ties of a given social and discursive order fall away, leaving the subject able to renew his or her relation to this order."<sup>43</sup> Literature is presented as an initiation which "has the potential to be a rite that changes the reader."<sup>44</sup> This interpretation, like Syrotinski's, is an important corrective to those, such as Verdès-Leroux, who hold that Paulhan strictly adhered to the view that art and literature inhabit their own sphere and transcend social responsibility. Rather, Milne makes clear that Paulhan believed that literature, through the fluidity of words and meaning, could change the identity and actions of readers as well as interpretations of the text, in the process transforming people's expectations of politics.<sup>45</sup> Milne argues that this "reveals the history of a different form of engagement, a form that has ... been

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<sup>42</sup> This is the way that Joseph M. Levine advocates that intellectual history ought to be conceived. Joseph M. Levine, "Intellectual History as History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 2 (2005): 190, 200.

<sup>43</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

written out of histories of the period.”<sup>46</sup>

Milne, like Syrotinski, places Paulhan within his intellectual/literary context, which is certainly relevant to understanding his work. There is no doubt that intellectual context is real and important; Paulhan worked and socialized within a community of intellectuals and writers, defined by their thinking and particularly by their intense engagement with the thoughts and writings of other intellectuals, both past and present.<sup>47</sup> However, Milne also situates Paulhan within the political and social setting of France in the first half of the twentieth century. Paulhan thought and wrote in a fragmented France, where the only thing that people could agree on was the need for change. He considered the “sorts of identification possible in a society where pluralism had broken down into violent social antagonism and national belonging was experienced as the need to purge society of certain social types.”<sup>48</sup> She presents Paulhan as reacting to the various forms of literary and political extremism of the left and right in the 1930s.<sup>49</sup> His theories of language and of politics opposed the promises of the revolutionary terror of the Communists and the post-war purges and the conservative rhetoric of the Fascists and the Monarchists. However, his political stance was not that of the average liberal-republican either. Milne demonstrates that Paulhan’s works reveal passionate arguments in favour of the need to respect democracy and equality at a very fundamental level. To understand Paulhan’s texts one has to address the problem of what he was up to when writing, and that cannot be done on evidence of the text alone or even in the context of previous texts that seem to address the same subject.

Paulhan’s works pose practical demands, among them a need to gain a familiarity with

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>47</sup> Cowan, “Intellectual, Social and Cultural History: Ideas in Context,” 183.

<sup>48</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 150.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 6-9.

the details of their historic context as well as to engage in close readings of the texts themselves. On the one hand, the social and historical context of Paulhan's writing must not be relegated to mere backdrop, a connection of events loosely related to the texts themselves. On the other hand, his own texts must not be engulfed and lost from view in representations of the historical process of which they were a part. This entails moving the emphasis of study to an examination of the broader circumstances conditioning his texts while engaging in a parallel and detailed scrutiny of the texts themselves. Moreover, Paulhan's texts bear a dialectical relationship towards their context. They both reflect and represent French society in the first half of the twentieth century, and were attempts to shape or alter that culture's dominant beliefs. Paulhan and his texts are thus useful to study, not just to illuminate a particular ambiguous intellectual, but in order to reveal and better understand the period that he lived in.

Consequently, understanding the problematic and controversial position that Paulhan held about the literary purge involves a careful dialogue between the meaning and form of his texts and between the texts and their contexts. As such, this thesis aims to appreciate the position that Paulhan played in the significant and prolonged debate regarding the post-war purges amongst intellectuals following French liberation from Nazi Occupation through the careful reading and historical contextualization of three of his key texts. *Fleurs de Tarbes, ou, La terreur dans les lettres* (*The Flowers of Tarbes or, Terror in Literature*), first published as an independent volume in 1941, but conceived as early as 1925, depicts Paulhan's thinking about language and literature.<sup>50</sup> Paulhan's book *De la Paille et du grain* (*Of Chaff and Wheat*), published in 1948, and his pamphlet *Lettre aux directeurs de la Résistance* (*Letter to the Directors of the Resistance*), written in 1949, and published in book form in 1952, directly address, and were written in

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<sup>50</sup> A number of early sections of *Flowers of Tarbes* were printed in journals and anthologies between 1926 and 1935, and a shorter text appeared in serial form in the *NRF* from June to October 1936.

response to, the postwar purges of writers. Through close readings of these seemingly unrelated texts, I hope to illuminate the logic of Paulhan's paradoxical role as both resister against and protector of collaborators. Each text approaches the same problem of the expectations we should have of language and literature. A comparative reading of his work resituates Paulhan's life within his ideas, where one can better appreciate how consistent his thinking was, and how much his conception of language and literature informed his philosophical and political insights.

It is also necessary to understand the social situation that Paulhan responded to in order to understand his thinking about the purge. The first chapter thus offers an explanation of the purge of writers following the Liberation of France. At liberation, collaboration was defined as a treacherous relationship with the enemy, in both occupied and Vichy France. The war consequently left a vicious legacy between those who had collaborated with the Nazis and those who had resisted collaboration. The purge was a process meant to return France to a pure, authentic state; collaborators were considered traitors and the Resistance was deemed the protector of this renewed and true France. At the heart of the process of the intellectual purges and the discussion that informed them was a particular conception of the responsibility of the writer and the possibility of purification. The responsibility of the writer as defined by law and by the majority of the Resistance writers during the purge expressed expectations regarding the writer's role in France. This revolved around a particular way of envisioning the power of the written word and the social influence of writers. The tropes of violence, renewal, purity, authenticity and treason that characterize post-war French discussion of its war experience recur throughout Paulhan's writing, clearly in his response to the purges, but also in his writing about the seemingly more innocuous subject of innovation in literature.

One of the dominant traits of Paulhan's work is the refusal to settle differences. His works repeatedly argue against the process of purgation/purification, or the act of cleansing by the

removal of impurities. The second chapter looks at the book *Flowers of Tarbes*, in which Paulhan lays out his ideas about language and literature. Sanctioned with the power to judge the merit of literary creations, twentieth-century literary criticism experienced an epistemological crisis in response to the denigration and dismissal of conventional modes of style, subject, and sentence waged by writers belonging to diverse, and seemingly unconnected, literary movements. *Flowers of Tarbes* is best read as an examination of, and in answer to, this dilemma. Paulhan's lifelong preoccupation with language and its ability to convey thought centered on the dynamics between what he called "Terror," or the continuous requirement to write against the literature and language of one's predecessors, and "Rhetoric," the acceptance of linguistic traditions, conventions, and commonplaces. Paulhan theorizes that since the Romantic period, literature has been dominated by Terrorist writers, whom he locates in such apparently opposing literary methods as Surrealism and Naturalism. To Paulhan, Terror is characterized by an attempt to expunge literature of all rhetorical conventions and rules in order to promote freedom of expression and authentic communication. This "Terrorist" manner of ridding literature of its "impurities" is, according to Paulhan, bound to its own rules and bound to create new rules. This is because the Terrorist writers are under the mistaken belief that there is the possibility for a pure language. Paulhan argues that, because language is both stable and changing, its meaning may break down or be understood differently than it was intended. In *Flowers of Tarbes* Paulhan presents a critical attitude towards attempts to throw off the mantle of the past and liberate language and literature from pre-existing patterns.

This text anticipates the terms with which Paulhan engages in his future polemics against the literary purges. This will be related in the third chapter, in which I demonstrate the ways in which the case that Paulhan makes against the purges draws from the ideas about language that he formulated in *The Flowers of Tarbes* at the same time as it is in direct reaction to the actual

process of the purge. The impossibility of language to escape commonplaces is related to France's inability to escape its divisive past. As expressed in *Of Chaff and Wheat* and *Letter to the Directors of the Resistance*, the purge of writers who took 'un-patriotic' stances during the war approximates the tactics of Terror and, moreover, those of the fascist regimes that the 'treasonous' writers supported. The inevitability of Terror falling victim to the Rhetoric it condemns is analogous to how the former Resistance adopted the purgative tactics of the system that it opposed. Paulhan seeks to bypass this historical and violent cycle. For Paulhan, language, because it is inherently both stable and flexible, creates the possibility for social interaction at the same time as it offers us the means of changing communities.

According to Paulhan, words and France are constantly redefined. In both literary and social contexts, this negotiation takes place in a situation of competing ideals. Like language, Paulhan claims, the nation becomes more resilient and sound, but not more pure and authentic, when it has been the object of social exchange, where ideas are challenged, accepted, rejected, and amended. This is how national identity rightly forms, breaks and changes. The nation conceived as a continual process of negotiation in language makes the writer a catalyst for social change, but this change can only happen through the intervention of the reader's interpretation. Rather than violently ridding troubling elements from its national identity, Paulhan believed that France could revise the norms that define it through the recognition of, and struggle with, difference. This sort of exchange cannot occur in the context of a purge that seeks to summarily eliminate difference.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PURGE: TREASON, PURITY, AND THE WRITER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Immediately after liberation, the literary community, at this time principally organized around the *Comité National des Écrivains* (CNE), reacted publicly to the writers who were perceived to have collaborated with the Germans during the war. The intellectual Resistance defined ethical principles, affirmed their duties, and their rights towards society. They created a blacklist of tainted writers and demanded their removal from the French literary scene through a judicial process and internal sanctions. These writers were engaged in a battle for the meaning of the Occupation years, in particular what it meant to resist or to collaborate and, above all, what it meant to write. The cleansing of French Letters was based, like the purge in general, on an ideal of purity and renewal which required a disassociation with the past. Charged with treason, collaborators were classified as outside of, or foreign to, France. The rebuilding of a new, authentic France was to be based on their removal. More specifically, the purge of and by French intellectuals was articulated through a particular conception of the uses, goals, ambitions, and consequences of literature. Following Liberation, and concurrent with the purge, discussion surrounding the question “what is literature?” and, more to the point, “What degree of responsibility should be assigned to words and ideas?” mobilized intellectuals from across the political and aesthetic spectrum. The predominant idea that emerged from these debates and which justified the intellectual purge was based on a conception of the writer's responsibility. This rested on the idea that writing generates predictable social effects and that it can be a direct cause of action.

The purging of the intellectuals was part of a wider post-liberation movement of *épuration*, which can be translated as either “purification” or “purge.” Following liberation in 1944, purges of political elites, the bureaucracy, the army, the church hierarchy, trade unions, and the press were undertaken by judicial authorities of the Provisional government established by De

Gaulle in 1944 to overcome the experience of the war and occupation. However, the purge of French collaborators was conducted in an uneven way. It is widely acknowledged that the purge focused on intellectuals when compared to political, military, bureaucratic, or industrial figures whose contribution to collaboration was likely more material and consequential.<sup>1</sup> This is partly because of the need for continuity in administration to maintain a sense of stability and to rebuild the French economy. As well, the Courts of Justice, tribunals set up to judge collaborators “in the name of the French people,” were composed of a magistrate and four jurors “who had proved their patriotic sentiments.” These jurors were usually chosen from members of the Resistance.<sup>2</sup> This practice raised understandable doubts about the fairness and impartiality of the trials and sentences.

Other procedural problems have been identified with the postwar purge in general. It has been characterized as disordered, confused and arbitrary. The most publicized purges happened in those areas that were most subject to public scrutiny, namely politics and intellectual life. Because the writers had left lengthy paper trails documenting statements of collaboration, their trials often took place before those of the politicians. Consequently, many of the writers who supported the collaboration went to trial before the politicians who had implemented it. The punishments varied considerably from case to case, and the severity of the sentence and punishment seems to have depended more on when the trial occurred than on the individual crime. Those who were sentenced earlier received harsher punishment than those who were

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<sup>1</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 2-4.; Tony Judt, “The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath*, eds. Deák, István, Jan Tomasz Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 302.; Peter Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy: The Purge of Collaborators in Liberated France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 117; Herbert R. Lottman, *The People's Anger: Justice and Revenge in Post-Liberation France* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 229.

<sup>2</sup> There were four different kinds of courts set up to judge alleged collaborators. There was a High Court to judge high-ranking members of the Vichy government; the Courts of Justice judged other cases of collaboration; the Civic Courts judged cases of unpatriotic behaviour, or national indignity, that were not technically crimes; and there were military tribunals. Writers appeared in front of the Courts of Justice and the Civic Courts. Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 577.

convicted later. Because punishments were harshest immediately following Liberation, when passions for retribution were the hottest, writers tended to suffer greater penalty than, for example, business leaders.

The *épuration* entailed defining collaboration as treason, bringing alleged collaborators/traitors to justice and punishing those found guilty. Certain collaborating writers, such as Paul Chack and Lucien Rebatet, were charged with treason under Article 75 of the French penal code, punishable by death.<sup>3</sup> France thus judged collaborationist writers as enemies of the state; writers, journalists, and intellectuals were charged with treason of the same order as Pétain, Pierre Laval, who was twice the head of Pétain's government, and the Ministers of Vichy.<sup>4</sup> The applicable clause affecting writers was that which defined intelligence with the enemy: "Any French Citizen who enters into collusion with a foreign power in the attempt to engage the enemy to undertake hostilities against France [will be considered a traitor]."<sup>5</sup> For intellectuals, this offence included, for instance, having published or given lectures in favour of the enemy and totalitarian doctrines. A second law, Article 83, was introduced in August 1944 to prosecute those who had committed lesser acts of treason. Tried in special Civic Courts, this "national indignity" charge led to prison sentences and national degradation, including the loss of certain citizenship rights, such as the right to vote or belong to certain professions.<sup>6</sup> In terms of sentencing, the distinction between the two charges was very unclear.

Peter Novick writes that the purge was based on a number of legal fictions, propagated by de Gaulle and others: "The Armistice was a crime, the vote of July 10 a betrayal, Vichy a usurper-regime, collaboration a policy of treason: these were the historic-judicial postulates of the

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<sup>3</sup> Diane Rubenstein, "Publish and Perish: the *Épuration* of French Intellectuals," *Journal of European Studies*, 23, no.1 (1993): 96.

<sup>4</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

purge.”<sup>7</sup> He argues that the purges applied retroactive legislation that turned social, some would say moral, necessity into jurisprudence. Although there was clear manipulation by Laval, the French Parliament had voted by 569 votes to 80 to grant Pétain power over the French state on July 10, 1940. Further, the Armistice of 1940 was welcomed by most of the French population, and Pétain was popularly supported by the people. Following the Hitler-Pétain meeting at Montoire on 24 October 1940, in the context of setting up the preliminary terms of an armistice relationship between defeated France and victorious Germany, collaboration became the official policy defining the relationship between the two countries. Vichy policy held that this collaborationist relationship meant working jointly for the mutual benefit of the two countries. Thus, supporting France’s collaboration was legal. For much of the French population, however, the term became synonymous with betrayal, selling out to the enemy, and supporting Germany’s cause and interests over those of France.

It is not surprising that liberation was accompanied by a discourse of national unity which privileged unity over difference. Following Liberation, Vichy was presented as an illegitimate interlude in French history. The healing myth that Charles de Gaulle offered the nation’s hurt pride is summarized well in a speech he made at the Hôtel de Ville: “Paris, Paris abused, Paris broken, Paris martyred but Paris liberated by her own people [libéré par lui-même], with the help of the armies of France, with the help and support of the whole of France, that is to say of fighting France, that is to say of the true France, the eternal France.”<sup>8</sup> In this characterization, France, a nation of resisters, unanimously resentful of the Occupation, had liberated itself, and most of the horrors had been the work of the Germans. Of course, the Gaullist or *résistancialiste* myth also raised the problem of the existence of French people—the collaborators—who were

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<sup>7</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France 1940-1944* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 295.

not part of the true France. Framed as anomalies and traitors, the collaborators were not seen as a reflection of authentic France. France would be purified and thus unified by the purge. Vichy and the Occupation, then, were best forgotten once the necessary trials took place.

The Resistance would redeem France. Though opposed to de Gaulle's vision of France's future, the Communists agreed, basically, with his interpretation of its recent past; in sum, "the Resistance represented the real France and incarnated the true feelings of the French people throughout the Occupation."<sup>9</sup> Of course, the Communists, who, after the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact disintegrated in 1941, were active in the resistance, quickly claimed the Resistance heritage as their own, calling themselves the "party of the 75,000 martyrs."<sup>10</sup> The official memory of the war, which both Communists and Gaullists agreed on, presented France as a nation of Resisters. Before resurrections and renewals could occur, France had to cleanse itself of those few who had collaborated. What was needed was a sort of "moral disinfecting of the community"<sup>11</sup>

Resistance writers imposed their own professional, or what they called moral, sanctions on the collaborationist writers.<sup>12</sup> The activities that the members of the intellectual Resistance undertook during the Occupation left them with a clear confidence in their own righteousness and influenced their standing at Liberation. Nazi occupation and Vichy were the catalysts of an extraordinary coalition of Resistance writers that rallied around the goal of reclaiming legitimate cultural production for the salvation of the French nation. One of the Resistance's first projects was the creation of committees organized along professional lines. One of the most active and longest lasting was the CNE, which Paulhan, along with Jacques Decour, and five others, helped

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<sup>9</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 603.

<sup>10</sup> The total number of French shot was more like 35,000, and clearly not all of these were Communists. *Ibid.*, 601.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 583.

<sup>12</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 19-20.

to establish in the fall of 1941.<sup>13</sup> It became the literary arm of the French resistance, initiated as a means of organizing French intellectuals into a solid front in opposition to Nazi occupation. Remarkably, during the Occupation the CNE and the Resistance on the whole facilitated an alliance between communist and non-communist writers. Although brought about at the behest of Louis Aragon and the Communist National Front, during the war the CNE was made up of a range of anti-fascist writers from across the political spectrum, including Catholic members of the French academy, François Mauriac; Albert Camus, who refused to accept ideological labels; and the fervent Communist Paul Eluard. They were united only in their opposition to the Nazi occupation.<sup>14</sup> As the main organ of unity among the resistant intelligentsia, the CNE was the triumphant site of credibility and authority at Liberation.

Margaret Atack makes clear that, during the war, resistance writers were actively engaged in a fight for public opinion. She writes that “to assess the contribution of the Resistance to the war effort in primarily military terms entails a fundamental misrecognition of the value to be accorded to the ideological and the discursive at this time, it is difficult to see how, without public expression, there could have been a Resistance.”<sup>15</sup> There were over one thousand different clandestine newspapers and journals produced in France, from short, hand-made documents of limited local circulation to widely distributed and well-produced papers.<sup>16</sup> This utilitarian need produced a literature of persuasion, meant to speak the truth and spread the word, under a repressive and silencing occupation. It comes as no surprise, then, that the discourse of literary Resistance before and after Liberation situated its writers as the guardians of true French

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<sup>13</sup> The other founding members of the CNE were Jacques Debû-Bridel, Charles Vildrac, Jean Guéhenno, Jean Blanzat, and le R.P. Maydiou.

<sup>14</sup> Lottman, *The People's Anger*, 234-235.

<sup>15</sup> Atack, *Literature and the French Resistance*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Kelly, “Clandestine Press,” in *Historical Dictionary of World War II France: The Occupation, Vichy, and the Resistance, 1938-1946*, ed. Bertram M. Gordon (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 287-288.

culture.<sup>17</sup> The war years fused literary legitimacy to the cause of the Resistance.

During the war, Paulhan was highly involved in risky Resistance activity and was highly regarded as the chief director and fundraiser of the Resistance's publishing activities. He has been called the “unofficial leader of the literary Resistance in Paris.”<sup>18</sup> Immediately following the Occupation, Paulhan resigned from his post as director of the *NRF*, which was taken over by the Germans and became a leading mouthpiece of the collaboration under the new direction of the fascist Drieu la Rochelle. Throughout the Occupation, Paulhan maintained a literary resistance from his office at Gallimard, located in the same building and on the same floor as the *NRF*. Here he held meetings and recruited writers for emerging Resistance tracts. Paulhan was able to bring his own prestige to bear on launching and supporting clandestine modes of cultural production in three noteworthy areas. He facilitated the production of a number of *Résistant* literary journals, including the first clandestine tract published in the occupied zone, *Résistance*, as well as the short-lived journal *La Pensée libre* and *Lettres françaises*; he helped to generate the Resistance literary press, especially *Éditions de Minuit*; and he belonged to Resistance organizations, most significantly, as a founding member of the CNE in the fall of 1941 and a member of the *Musée de l'Homme* network, the first Resistance organization in the occupied zone, in November 1940, only five months after the armistice.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> James D. Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 43-45.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Ungar, “Éditions de Minuit,” in *Historical Dictionary of World War II France: The Occupation, Vichy, and the Resistance, 1938-1946*, ed. Bertram M. Gordon (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 116.

<sup>19</sup> These were dangerous activities. In May of 1941, Paulhan, accused of hiding the Roneotype machine for the *Musée de l'Homme*, was taken into custody, but only after he had dismantled it and dropped it piece by piece into the Seine. He was subjected to intense interrogation and solitary confinement. Thanks to the intervention of Drieu la Rochelle, Paulhan's imprisonment only lasted a week. Five members of his *Musée de l'Homme* cohort were arrested between January 13 and April 18, 1941. They were executed by firing squad on February 23, 1942. Other members arrested later in the war were sent to Nazi concentration camps. Paulhan also evaded danger in 1941 when the printing press of the *La Pensée Libre* was raided by the Gestapo. Richard Rand, Introduction to *Of Chaff and Wheat: Writers, War and Treason*, by Jean Paulhan, trans. Richard Rand (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), viii-x; Jacques Debû-Bridel, *La résistance intellectuelle: textes et témoignages réunis et présentés par Jacques Debû-Bridel* (Paris: Julliard, 1970), 43-44.

As a conduit for texts and guidance, Paulhan brought his insider's knowledge to a group of engaged newcomers. Consecrated by the Resistance, Paulhan came out of the war highly respected.

During the war, the CNE's main activity was to publish clandestine newspapers, which were intended to inform people of events unreported in the censored press and to bolster morale amongst the faithful.<sup>20</sup> The Resistance publications attacked the culture of collaboration and sought to inculcate a spirit of defiance in the French people. Although the first purge trial of Georges Suarez, editor of *Aujourd'hui*, took place in October 1944, Resistance newspapers had been preparing for the purge from the earliest days of the collaboration. Paulhan and Decour founded a periodical for the CNE called *Lettres françaises*, which appeared on a regular basis in the fall of 1942.<sup>21</sup> The first issue makes its mandate clear; its purpose was to save the honour of French letters and punish traitors.<sup>22</sup> As well as offering political commentary, cultural criticism, poetry, and homage to victims, the *Lettres françaises* issued blistering portraits of intellectual collaborators and made threats against the infamous authors, including Drieu La Rochelle, Robert Brasillach, Alphonse de Châteaubriant, Marcel Jouhandeau, Lucien Rebatet, and Paul Morand. The writers of *Lettres françaises* put forward a very specific notion of what the CNE's role in shaping postwar France should be by calling for the CNE's involvement in deciding the future punishment of collaborators.<sup>23</sup> The texts of the journal suggest that the CNE's role would be non-ideological, objective, even technical, for the good of justice, for France and for literature. They

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Rodney Christofferson, *France during World War II: From Defeat to Liberation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 162.

<sup>21</sup> Decour, along with other members of the French Communist Party, was arrested and executed by the Gestapo on May 30, 1942, before the first issue of *Lettres françaises* had been released. Decour was replaced by Claude Morgan, who, because of the secrecy of the project, took three months to resume the publication. Part of this delay was because he did not know Paulhan and was thus unable to benefit from his unmatched literary connections. The journal began to appear regularly during the fall of 1942. There were nineteen clandestine issues, and the final issue was sold in plain view after the Liberation.

<sup>22</sup> Debu-Bridel, *La résistance intellectuelle*, 51-53.

<sup>23</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 34-38.

were undoubtedly motivated by an extremely strong desire for justice. However, it was soon clear that there was more involved than the punishment of individual conduct.

At war's end the victory of the literary left over the right provoked a redistribution of the literary field that was anything but a return to pre-war conditions. The Liberation has often been presented as the birth of a new generation of writers. Camus wrote that "journalism is the only field in which the purge is total, because we carried out, in the insurrection, a total renewal of its personnel."<sup>24</sup> There was a complete reversal in the press immediately following liberation; in 1939 parties of the right controlled 46.2% of the total newspaper circulation and the socialist and communist press accounted for 11.4%. In late 1944, the right's share had dropped to 12.7% and the Socialist and Communist newspapers accounted for 47.8% of the press.<sup>25</sup> The speed at which newspapers and press companies were purged and then replaced with new titles, many of resistance pedigree, was astounding. It illustrates the 'break with the past' attitude of the liberation, exemplified by the purges. This sustained an expectation of a true restructuring of society. From Resistance struggles, a New France would emerge, united and cleansed of the old evils.<sup>26</sup>

The purge's purpose was to establish French national unity after a traumatic national division. It was intended as a transitional phase to rebuild the identity of the French nation. The purge of intellectuals, therefore, was undertaken as a means to rescue French letters from the damaging effects of Nazi Occupation. As Peter Novick has argued the central motivating factor of the *épuration* was not a thirst for vengeance but a desire for *renouveau*, or renewal. He therefore views the purge within the framework of the Resistance's dream of a true social and

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<sup>24</sup> Lottman, *The People's Anger*, 232.

<sup>25</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 118.

<sup>26</sup> Anna Boschetti, *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and Les Temps Modernes*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 105.

economic renovation of France, the dream to create a New France, “pure et dure.” The following quotation from the 25 January 1943 journal *Résistance* is typical of this call for a true renovation of France: “France cannot hope to be restored or recover her traditional place in the world unless she achieves a social and moral revolution...The revolution can be achieved only by entirely new men. The new France cannot entrust her destiny to those who were unable to save her in the past.”<sup>27</sup> “From Liberation to Revolution” was the slogan of the journal *Combat* following the Occupation.<sup>28</sup> The pre-war social and political order, and with it its principles and values, were to be swept away. True revolutionary hopes were invested in the liberation and the purges were a tool to achieve this.

The CNE would not, in and of itself, form a legally empowered body. As a result, its policies and their enforcement were always *a priori* political in nature. Instead, the CNE sought to enforce its own ban on writers and publishers tainted by collaboration. Most professional organizations set up their own purge committees and professional sanctions. During its first non-clandestine meeting on 4 September 1944, just days after the liberation of Paris, the CNE called for “the just punishment of the impostors and traitors” amongst writers and publishers.<sup>29</sup> The Committee drew up a blacklist of ninety-four disgraced writers, including Drieu la Rochelle, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Brasillach, and Rebatet. In October and November the total number of names was increased to 160. The CNE stressed repeatedly that the publication of this blacklist was intended purely for internal purposes, as a kind of checklist for members of the Committee who had sworn never to be published alongside or to publish those who had had dealings with the enemy. The sanctions brought by this internal purge, if not harsher, were certainly wider ranging

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<sup>27</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial & Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 192.

<sup>29</sup> David Drake, *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 13.

than the tribunals. The CNE found its own blacklist to be an effective means of preventing targeted writers from getting published. In effect, the blacklist attempted to close all public forums to any writer accused of collaboration. Furthermore, the CNE implied that the return to a state of free activity in the literary field was predicated on the carrying out of such suppression.

The efforts of the writers from the CNE, particularly in drawing up the blacklist, set the terms for the cases of writers that would be heard before the Courts of Justice and Civic Courts. The group attempted to influence the results of court proceedings. The CNE loudly demanded that the government punish all those writers who were members of pro-German political parties and paramilitary organizations, who had attended literary conventions in Germany after June 1940, who had received money from Germany, directly or indirectly, and all those who had “helped, encouraged and supported through their writings, their actions or their influence Nazi propaganda and oppression.”<sup>30</sup> In the effort, a delegation of members brought one version of the blacklist to the Minister of Justice in February 1944, hoping to further the prosecution of those they considered the major offenders.<sup>31</sup> Some from the blacklist, like Robert Brasillach, Charles Maurras, and Lucien Rebatet, were put on trial, while others, like Jean Giono, Marcel Jouhandeau, and Henry de Montherlant, were not. Largely because of the way that the CNE pursued collaborationist writers, Paulhan tendered his resignation from the CNE in 1946. In fact, as early as October 1944 he had to be dissuaded from resigning from the organization. His position never wavered; at no time was he in favour of the blacklist or the legal proceedings against writers. He launched a protest against this purge that played out for the next ten years.

Most importantly, Paulhan disputed the CNE’s understanding of the writer’s responsibility that gave theoretical support to the legal proceedings and became the focal point of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>31</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 22.

debate. The trials and the blacklists delineated what it meant to write. As Gisèle Sapiro, a leading scholar on the interactions between the French literary and political fields, relates, “[t]he study of the intellectual debates in which writers took public aesthetic, ethical, and political positions...underlies the authors’ conceptions of literature and their social role as writers.”<sup>32</sup> The relationship between literature and politics raises the question of the independence of the literary field.<sup>33</sup> Reviews were the vehicle for important polemics and exchanges among writers about the appropriate treatment of those of their number who had collaborated during the Occupation. These were focused on the fundamental problem of the responsibility of intellectuals that defined the immediate postwar literary scene: Can you write without consequence? What is the weight of words in wartime? Are publishers and the press in solidarity with the authors they publish?<sup>34</sup> Or, as literary critic Phillip Watts asks, “What was the place of pro-Nazi and Vichyite writers in the chain of responsibility that ran from Laval to the butcher who sold meat on the blackmarket?”<sup>35</sup> Were the writings acts or opinions? These debates centered on the status of language.

In particular, the case of Robert Brasillach became a “mini-Dreyfus affair,” dividing the nation’s thinkers into two broad camps.<sup>36</sup> During the occupation, Brasillach was editor of the virulently pro-Nazi newspaper *Je Suis Partout*, the most successful political-literary collaborationist weekly.<sup>37</sup> In the newspaper, he had often advocated the arrest of leading literary figures and the execution of his Resistance enemies. He was also fiercely anti-Semitic; a typically venomous statement from the September 1942 issue of *Je Suis Partout* reads: “We must remove

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<sup>32</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, “Literature and Politics: The French Literary Field during the German Occupation (1940-1944),” in *Reading Pierre Bourdieu in a Dual Context: Essays from India and France*, eds Roland Lardinois and Meenakshi Thapan (London: Routledge, 2006), 157.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>34</sup> Pierre Assouline, *L’Épuration des intellectuels* (Paris: Complexe, 1996), 20, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 190.

<sup>37</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 201.

the Jews in a block, and not keep the young ones.”<sup>38</sup> However, the postwar governments could not punish opinions without betraying their commitment to a democratic process. The issue was whether Brasillach was a traitor. For those advocating the purge the answer was clear; they equated a treasonous word with a performance of treason. Brasillach was sentenced to death on December 30, 1944 and executed February 1946, despite a petition in his defence signed by fifty-nine writers, among them Paul Valéry, François Mauriac, Albert Camus, and Paulhan.<sup>39</sup> The Brasillach petition became an incident that had consequences which went beyond the individual case, raising moral and ethical questions about the entire process of the purge.<sup>40</sup>

This can be seen clearly in the dynamic polemic between Mauriac and Camus about Brasillach’s execution and the purge, in general. This took place within Camus’ journal *Combat* and the conservative *Le Figaro* throughout the fall and winter of 1944-45. The debate centered on what was needed for France’s restoration; Mauriac could not see how hatred and retribution could heal France’s wounds, and Camus could not see how France could reform itself if corrupt elements were not punished and expunged. Mauriac—nicknamed “St François des Assises” [St. Francis of the Court of Assizes]—disputed the purge on the grounds of Catholic mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and he appealed for clemency in the case of Brasillach.<sup>41</sup> Camus at first wholeheartedly backed the purge, seeing it as a just and fair measure and necessary to the rebuilding of France. For instance, in October 1944 he wrote that “France is carrying, like a foreign entity [un corps étranger], a minority of men...[whose] existence poses a problem for

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>39</sup> The composition of the petition went through various stages. The first version limited the number of potential signers to members of the resistance. It was also convoluted in its argument. As Kaplan claims “It wasn’t clear if the goal was to save a good writer for his potential, or prevent a bad writer from becoming a martyr.” The final version of the petition simply stated that Brasillach’s father had died as a hero of France in the First World War, and asked that his son should be spared death. Kaplan, *The Collaborator*, 194.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>41</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 167.

justice.”<sup>42</sup> Camus argued that justice, especially for murdered Resistance comrades, had to come before the charitable mercy that Mauriac encouraged.<sup>43</sup> Later, devastated by what he saw as the unfairness and ineffectiveness of the purge, Camus distanced himself from his previous position. To him, the purge had gone from being necessary to “odious.”<sup>44</sup> After much vacillation, Camus signed the Brasillach petition on January 1945, on the grounds of his general opposition to the death penalty. Retrospectively, however, Camus judged Mauriac to have been right; on January 5, 1945 he wrote that “Mr. Mauriac is right; we shall have need of charity.”<sup>45</sup>

The ramifications of what Brasillach’s execution meant for literature were developed and disputed by French writers. A month after the execution, the newspaper *Carrefour* published a string of articles by prominent intellectuals on “The responsibility of the writer.” Pierre Seghers, a Resistance poet, summed up the CNE argument:

If a writer writes in a pro-Nazi newspaper in the presence of Germans, “It seems that Pierre Emmanuel is a communist and I’m the only one who doesn’t know it,” he’s no longer a writer but an informer. When, on the same day, another “collaborator” signs his name to this suggestion: “To bring France back to life [relever], we have only to lead the communists to the moat at Vincennes”; he is putting the blood of patriots on his conscience. If Brasillach is dead in this same moat, if he fell in turn, this is justice.<sup>46</sup>

This reflects the Resistance credo that “to speak [or write] is to act.”<sup>47</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre was the symbol and chief theoretician of intellectual engagement and committed literature.<sup>48</sup> Although he

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<sup>42</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Mauriac’s charity extended to personal forgiveness, as well. Brasillach had often written disdainfully of Mauriac, both before and during the war. For instance, in *Notre avant-guerre*, published in 1941, Brasillach referred to Mauriac, who had recovered from throat cancer in 1932, as a “‘squeaky old bird’ with a taste for suicidal women and tortured adolescents.” He criticized Mauriac for his loyalty to the Republican system and saw him as unsuitable for the ‘new order’ that France was facing. Kaplan, *The Collaborator*, 191.

<sup>44</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 586.

<sup>45</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 167.

<sup>46</sup> Kaplan, *The Collaborator*, 215.

<sup>47</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Sartre had also been a member of the CNE, although Decour had refused to accept him in 1941 because, as Jackson states, “the Communists viewed him as a degenerate writer steeped in Heidegger,” as well as a threat to their authority. By 1943, such reservations were cast aside and Sartre was accepted into the CNE. He founded the monthly *Les Temps modernes* in October 1945. It soon took the place of the now tainted *NRF* as France’s pre-eminent political and literary review. Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 502.

rarely commented directly on the trials, Sartre formulated his theory of engaged literature within months of the first trial, and it largely reiterates and systematizes the theme of the writer's responsibility as presented during the trials. He refused to sign the Brasillach petition and, though he never explained the reasoning behind this choice, much of his writing of this period claims that, to be responsible, a writer must be prepared to die for his or her convictions. His lengthy essay "What is Literature?" speaks indirectly to the purges by grappling with what literature is and what it should and could be.<sup>49</sup> He "saw literature as a tool that could be used to defend certain cause, [and] he also understood it as a trace that could return to lead the writer before the tribunal."<sup>50</sup> The call for ethical and political commitment by writers rested on the notion that ideas mattered more than words and that with ideas come political and ethical responsibility. To Sartre, writing should reveal the world with the intention of changing it. Literature thus demands that we judge it and the writers who produce it.

For the proponents of the purge the term "les responsables" became a label that designated any writer who had collaborated. Vercors, author of the influential Resistance novel *Silence de la mer*, wrote that "a published writing is an intellectual act [un acte de la pensée]. The writer is responsible for the consequences of this act."<sup>51</sup> The text becomes testimony. A text has consequences; the writer is legally and morally complicit for actions that the writing supported or promoted. As Watts states, the logic underneath the purges holds that "The writer assumes a 'litigious responsibility' when he writes."<sup>52</sup> Thus, the *épuration* of intellectuals did more than punish offending authors. It was based on a particular conception of literature which defined the

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<sup>49</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, "What is Literature?," in *What is Literature? and Other Essays*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988)

<sup>50</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 60.

<sup>51</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 61.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

role and responsibility of writers as engagement, and culpability, in social or moral action.<sup>53</sup>

Paulhan's stance was in direct protest to these actions; the points that Paulhan raises are express counter-arguments to the actions, motivations and philosophy underlying the purges within the literary community promoted and performed by the CNE. He disputed with friends, colleagues, and literary and resistance associates who supported the blacklist on the authority of a patriotic democracy, a pure France, and a particular notion of intellectual engagement. Paulhan's protection of collaborating writers after the war was difficult for many of his fellow writers to understand, especially writers who, like him, had stellar resistance credentials. Paulhan attracted the scorn of many writers and Resistance allies. The CNE spoke of the "frivolousness of his opinions" and Julien Benda wondered whether it "is...bad faith on Paulhan's part? Or feeble-mindedness? Is he a jester entertaining himself? Does he have psychological problems?"<sup>54</sup> Others conjectured that Paulhan had taken a slide to the right, or that undisclosed and troubling political loyalties were just now coming to the fore. Few took him or his arguments against the purge seriously.

When read against his own theories of literature and language, however, Paulhan's seemingly paradoxical position is quite sound and certainly consistent. Paulhan engaged in a different sort of polemic when he took on established literary authorities and linguistic assumptions in his book *Flowers of Tarbes*. Syrotinski writes that *Flowers of Tarbes* was "written at a time when literary critics were still highly respected professionals with a visible public profile, and even though the predictable and well-ordered literary world was a far cry from the cut and thrust of our contemporary theoretical arena, there was no less intensity and urgency

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<sup>53</sup> The actions of the purge and the principles about literature underlying it were not universally accepted. Obviously, those accused of collaboration, for one, disputed the trials and blacklist. Arguing for freedom of speech and 'art for art's sake' were popular forms of defence. As well, some Resistance members, like Georges Duhamel, broke with the CNE consensus because of worry that the Communists within it were assuming too much influence.

<sup>54</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 112.

in the stakes being contested.”<sup>55</sup> Writing from within this environment, Paulhan set out to distinguish a set of foundational beliefs in the way that literature has been judged since the Romantic period. He looks at the premises about language, words, and ideas that underlay prominent perceptions of how literature has been, and ought to be, written and read. He then interrogates these foundational beliefs and finds that they conceal a profound anxiety about language and its ability to purely express intention and communicate meaning. This conception of literature was quite different than that which inspired the rationale of the purge. Indeed, in *Flowers of Tarbes* Paulhan argues against the same sorts of claims about the necessity of purging to promote purity and renewal that characterized postwar France

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<sup>55</sup> Michael Syrotinski, “Translator’s Introduction,” in *The Flowers of Tarbes, or Terror in Literature*, trans. Michael Syrotinski (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), ix-x.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *FLOWERS OF TARBES: TERROR, RHETORIC, AND LITERARY INTEGRITY*

The prevailing conception of the responsibility of the writer that was manifested in postwar arguments in favour of the purge relied on specific ideas about language and literature, and about purity and renewal. Paulhan's own ideas about literature and language emerge throughout all of his writings, but they are most comprehensively laid out in *Fleurs de Tarbes, ou, La terreur dans les lettres* (*Flowers of Tarbes*). Familiarity with these ideas is essential to understanding his position concerning the postwar purges. *Flowers of Tarbes* was Paulhan's attempt to clarify the terms necessary to engage in conscientious judgement of literature. He writes that "If it is true that criticism is the counterpart to the literary arts, and in a sense their conscience, we have to admit that literature these days does not have a clear conscience."<sup>1</sup> The book grapples with the crucial problems of defining literature, and, perhaps more radically, what it owes us, in a context in which there were vehemently competing literary movements which, as Paulhan demonstrates, nevertheless shared certain unconsidered assumptions and debilitating anxieties about writing, reading, and language itself. Like the questions that surrounded the purge of writers, Paulhan seeks to understand the expectations that society should have of literature.

Paulhan identifies "Terror" as a dominant strain in literature that seeks to continually write against the literature and language of the past. He sees this as the chief source and method of literary practice and criticism since the Romantic period and in his own day. Terror seeks to expunge literature of all rhetorical conventions and rules in order to promote freedom of expression and authentic communication. It is therefore, apparently, in direct opposition to Rhetoric, which Paulhan sees as based on the premise that language is in no need of subversive

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<sup>1</sup> "S'il est vrai que la critique soit la contrepartie des arts et comme leur conscience, il faut avouer que les Lettres de nos jours n'ont pas bonne conscience." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 33; Paulhan, *Flowers of Tarbes*, 5.

intervention. Through his argument, however, Paulhan reveals that Terror is blinded to its own reliance on conventional language and therefore its own collusion in Rhetoric. Terror's interconnectedness with Rhetoric, and the very nature of language, in Paulhan's account, reveals the limits of Terrorist claims to literary freedom, originality, and transgression. Rather than endlessly purging or purifying literature and language of unwanted linguistic elements, Paulhan's conception of literature requires a different and more realistic form of literary judgement, based on an awareness of the limitations, but also the possibilities, of language. Only then will justice be brought to bear on language.

Paulhan was clearly a fan of innovative and experimental writing. This is apparent in his directorship of the monthly *NRF*. He became editor of the *Revue* in April 1925 and officially became *directeur* in January 1935, having been secretary of the review under Jacques Rivière since 1920. At the helm of the *NRF*, Paulhan launched and championed the writing of many young authors from the avant-garde, including Louis Aragon and André Breton, who were both founding members of the Surrealist movement. Paulhan had always conceived of his editorial function to be bringing together writers from opposing territories. Above all, he sought to balance the experimental against the orthodox, whether literary or political, within the pages of the *NRF*. Writing to Jouhandeau in 1950, Paulhan's convictions had not changed: "The *NRF*: before 1940 I was able to organize a kind of continuous reconciliation (without which I see no point at all in being involved in a review): Sartre next to you, and Gide sitting on Claudel's (ample) lap."<sup>2</sup> This studied eclecticism kept the *NRF* from becoming the organ of any particular school or group. Paulhan planned and structured the review in order that conventional styles and views were

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<sup>2</sup> Martyn Cornick and Christopher Flood, "Reconciling France: Jean Paulhan and the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 1953," *South Central Review* 17, no.4 (Winter, 2000): 28.

constantly tested by newer, non-conformist elements. This dialectical approach was meant to create responsive change; it prevented sectarianism or dogmatism based on ideas of purity.

Paulhan critiqued writing during a period when, according to him, “*mastery* and *perfection* more or less denote artificiality and empty convention, when *beauty*, *virtuosity*, and even *literature* signify above all *what one must not do*.”<sup>3</sup> He grappled with the problem of judging literature after a time when, as Renato Poggioli has noted, “the modern critical classical tradition dissolved.”<sup>4</sup> The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were remarkable for the development of numerous and varied literary groups, each with their own theorists, leaders and disciples, and each proclaiming their own conception of literature’s purpose and value. Though broadly conceived and wide-spread, with no particularly agreed upon programme, the Romantic period of literature is seen by Paulhan as constituting a sharp break with the classical tradition, which, according to Poggioli, “is one in which there exists no avant-garde force at all.”<sup>5</sup> Poggioli sees the avant-garde as attempting to transgress against what is already established and, thus, as in a state of mutual antagonism towards both the public and tradition.

Paulhan aligns this break with the Terror period of the French Revolution, considering this to be the time when history took a radical turn.<sup>6</sup> He writes:

We call periods of *Terror* those moments in the history of nations ... when it suddenly seems that the State requires not ingenuousness and systematic methods, nor even science and technology—no one cares about any of that—but rather the extreme purity of the soul, and the freshness of communal innocence.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “*maîtrise* et *perfection* désignent à peu près l’artifice et la convention vaine, où *beauté*, *virtuosité* et jusqu’à *littérature* signifient avant tout *ce qu’il ne faut pas faire*.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 39; Paulhan, *Flowers of Tarbes*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>6</sup> Paulhan specifically alludes to the revolution only once in the text. It is clear that he is referring to the period of 1793-94. He represents the period by Joseph Lebon, a particularly fanatical and cruel administrator of the Reign of Terror, and a disciple of Maximilien Robespierre..

<sup>7</sup> “L’on appelle *Terreurs* ces passages dans l’histoire des nations... où il semble soudain qu’il faille à la conduite de l’État, non pas l’astuce et la méthode, ni même la science et la technique—de tout cela l’on n’a plus que faire—mais

Like the Terror of the Revolution, which, in the words of Maximilien Robespierre, attempted to “purge its enemies and hold on to the political ground it had gained,” there was also a violent and revolutionary overthrow in Literature.<sup>8</sup> During this period there was a shift from the rule-bound imperatives of rhetoric and genre to the continuing abandonment of these rules in Romanticism and its successors, with a search for greater originality and purity of expression. As Jacques Barzun argues, “Classicism is ... stability within known limits; romanticism is expansion within limits known and unknown.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, to Mario Praz, Classic and Romantic “denote, respectively, ‘equilibrium’ and ‘interruption of equilibrium’.”<sup>10</sup> Rhetoric, for Paulhan, is on the side of tradition and continuity with the past.

A reactionary and revolutionary energy was at the core of Romanticism, which quite deliberately set out to transform not only the theory and practice of literature, and all art, but the very way we perceive the world. Consequently, the Romantics sought to define their goals through systematic contrast with the norms of *ancien régime* neoclassicism. These writers, including Victor Hugo and François-René Chateaubriand, self-consciously asserted their differences from the previous age and declared their freedom from what they took to be its mechanical conventions. In style, the Romantics preferred boldness over the preceding age's desire for restraint, maximum suggestiveness over the neoclassical ideal of clarity, and free experimentation over the rules of composition, genre, and decorum. They promoted the conception of the artist as inspired creator over that of the artist as maker or technical master.<sup>11</sup>

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bien plutôt une extrême pureté de l'âme, et la fraîcheur de l'innocence commune.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 61; Paulhan, *Flowers of Tarbes*, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Or, “Terror is nothing other than prompt, severe, inflexible justice.” Maximilien Robespierre, “Justification of the Use of Terror” Internet Modern History Sourcebook. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/robespierre-terror.html> (accessed May 1, 2008)

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Barzun, *Classic, Romantic, and Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 8.

<sup>11</sup> David Coward, *A History of French Literature: From Chanson de geste to Cinema* (Malden, Ma: Blackwell

The Romantics elevated the imagination as the supreme faculty of the mind. This contrasted distinctly with established arguments for the supremacy of reason. Emphasis on the activity of the imagination was accompanied by greater stress on the importance of intuition, instincts, and feelings.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Romantics rebelled against classicism's inscription of general or universal characteristics of human behaviour as suitable subject matter, instead focusing on colourful and particular individual manifestations of human activity.<sup>13</sup> Romantic writers and critics, thus, according to Paulhan, reacted to the formal rules and conventions that preceded them.<sup>14</sup> The usual Classical criteria of judgement, based on a writer's ability to function within the various formal rules imposed by traditions of genre and rhetorical composition, were no longer appropriate for evaluating Romantic writers and their successors, whose 'Terrorism' consisted in radically abandoning accepted literary forms in search of a more authentic, original expressiveness.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, succeeding literary movements were inspired by aspects of Romanticism at the same time as they revolted against other traits of the Romantics. David Coward writes that "Romanticism, which had applied a revolutionary stamp to literature, continued to fuel aesthetic debates which led, often by reaction against what had proceeded, to new movements and schools."<sup>16</sup> Some critics believe that two identifiable movements immediately followed Romanticism, broadly categorized as Symbolism and Realism.<sup>17</sup> On one hand, the Romantic impulse generated movements upholding the imagination and contributing to the "cult of the strange."<sup>18</sup> Symbolists attempted to look beyond appearance and decipher the symbols concealing an ideal world; Dadaists wanted to destroy art and modern culture through anti-aesthetic creations

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Publishing, 2004), 198.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>14</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 32-33; Paulhan, *Flowers of Tarbes*, 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 83-83.

<sup>16</sup> Coward, *A History of French Literature*, 199.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 220.

and protest activities; Surrealists attempted to attain a “new mode of pure expression” by melding the real and the unconscious.<sup>19</sup> Alternatively, Realist writers, like Gustave Flaubert, were directly concerned with what is absorbed by the senses, and Naturalist writers like Émile Zola, endeavored to apply methodical observation and experimentation to writing.<sup>20</sup> They attempted to portray the lives, appearances, problems, customs, and mores of the middle and lower classes, of the unexceptional, the ordinary, the humble, and the unadorned. Indeed, they conscientiously set themselves to reproducing all the hitherto ignored mental attitudes, physical settings, and material conditions of contemporary life and society.<sup>21</sup> All of these movements were heir to a strain in literature that valued, above all, purity and authenticity of expression. In the Symbolist context, this purity was to be attained through the liberation and expression of inner truth. The Realist tradition would attain this authenticity through the exact reproduction of reality. Both camps maintained that any attempt at literary effect or conventional style, because these are artificial, would be a falsification of this truth. The writers and literary assumptions that Paulhan addresses as Terrorist throughout *Flowers of Tarbes* belong to these various post-Classical—modern or avant-garde—movements.

Certainly, between, and within, the two broadly defined movements there were antagonisms. These different schools of writing each proposed the proper way to write, and dismissed other conceptions of literature. Zola, reacting to Romantics and contemporary Symbolists, writes in his manifesto that “idealistic refers to writers who cast aside observation and experiment, and base their works on the supernatural and the irrational, who admit, in a

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<sup>19</sup> André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), 24.

<sup>20</sup> Zola wrote in his preface to *Thérèse Raquin*: “While I was busy writing *Thérèse Raquin* I forgot the world and devoted myself to copying life exactly and meticulously, giving myself up entirely to precise analysis of the mechanism of the human being.” Émile Zola, Preface to *Thérèse Raquin*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, trans. Leonard Tancock (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1987), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Coward, *A History of French Literature*, 224.

word, the power of mysterious forces outside of the determinism of the phenomena.”<sup>22</sup> Breton, reacting to writers of a realist bent, writes in his first *Manifesto of Surrealism*:

And the descriptions! There is nothing to which their vacuity can be compared; they are nothing but so many superimposed images taken from some stock catalogue, which the author utilizes more and more whenever he chooses; he seizes the opportunity to slip me his postcards, he tries to make me agree with him about the clichés.<sup>23</sup>

The subversive ideas in theories of literature, delivered in what seemed to be radical manifestoes, and written by linguistically powerful individuals, were thus both propelled by and reactions to the revolutionary spirit and events of Romanticism, as well as a response to each other.

Despite the vast differences between them, the French proponents of various symbolist and realist schools of literature unanimously rejected what they saw as the artificiality of both the Classicism and the Romanticism of the academies. Poggioli argues that the avant-garde “reveals itself in the sudden conviction that all preceding art, from classical antiquity to the eve of our day, had been nothing but a waste of time.”<sup>24</sup> They abhorred classical writing, judging it to deal in stereotypes, falsehoods and insincere sentiments. Furthermore, as Poggioli states “the normal and genuine polemic of the avant-garde concentrates its fire not so much on the remote past as on the more recent past, on the cultural world of the oldsters and oldtimers, on their fathers’ and grandfathers’ generations.”<sup>25</sup> The vanguard of Paulhan’s time, many whom he supported in his role as literary impressionado, were therefore committed to new ideals, seeing traditions, institutions and orthodoxies as outmoded prisons of convention. As pioneers they adopted a strong ‘down-with-the-past’ attitude.<sup>26</sup> Rather than existing as the most recent manifestation of a

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<sup>22</sup> Émile Zola, “The Experimental Novel” in *Émile Zola: The Naturalist Novel*, ed. Maxwell Geismar, 1-32. (Ste. Anne de Bellevue, P.Q.: Harpell’s Press Co-operative, 1964), 15.

<sup>23</sup> Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*

tradition stretching back into the past, the avant-garde writer saw him or herself as standing at the head of a completely new practice stretching, hopefully, into the future. Taken together, Terror, as a centre of tendencies and ideas, was thus characterized by the deliberate departure from tradition and the use of innovative and experimental forms of expression, involving not just new techniques but new visions of language and reality.

In the *Flowers of Tarbes* the differences between the literary schools, and between individual poets and authors, fall away to demonstrate a common premise concerning language from which, as Paulhan argues, all literature operates. Michael Syrotinski argues that Paulhan's purpose in writing *Flowers of Tarbes* was to discover "certain invariant features across the range of historical manifestations, the constants which could allow one to form a quasi-scientific law of the literary act itself."<sup>27</sup> Paulhan meant to discover the philosophy, methods and goals underpinning Terror in literature. What he finds at the core of Terror is a distrust of rhetoric. He writes:

So it goes for the diverse schools which have followed on from Romanticism. Whether it is Symbolism or Unanimism, the Paroxysts or the Surrealists, with each and every one of them we cannot fail to be struck these days by their verbal idiosyncracies. Furthermore, every one of them has believed it was based on a rejection of verbalism and literary artifice—and each and every one of them begins by discovering, with abundant energy, a particular object (the mind, man, society, the unconscious) which, it seems to them, the previous schools took it upon themselves to hide behind words."<sup>28</sup>

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(Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 95-96.

<sup>27</sup> Syrotinski, "Translator's Introduction," x.

<sup>28</sup> "Ainsi en va-t-il des écoles diverses qui se sont succédé depuis le romantisme. Qu'il s'agisse du symbolisme ou de l'unanimisme, des paroxystes ou des surréalistes, il n'en est pas une qui ne nous frappe aujourd'hui par ses manies verbales. Il n'en est pas une non plus qui n'ait cru se fonder contre tout procédé—mais chacune d'elles commence par découvrir avec beaucoup d'énergie un objet: l'esprit, l'homme, la société, l'inconscient, que les écoles précédentes lui semblent avoir pris à tâche de dissimuler sous les mots. Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 86; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 40-41.

Terrorist writers were tied together by a common quest to get away from rhetorical language and formal commonplaces.<sup>29</sup> They did so in a desire to convey truth in a pure state, liberated from corrupted and corrupting conventional language.

Paulhan writes that “If we were to define writers over the last one hundred and fifty years, through their countless adventures, in terms of what they have always demanded, we find that they are unanimous in wanting to *refuse* something.”<sup>30</sup> *The Flowers of Tarbes*’ central allegory involves a public park, representing the ‘Garden of Literature,’ where Terror has set up the injunction that “IT IS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER THE PARK CARRYING FLOWERS.”<sup>31</sup> Paulhan imagines: “Here is what happened, more or less (I think): a woman was walking along carrying a rose. The keeper said to her: “You know very well that no one is allowed to pick flowers.” “I had it when I came in,” the woman answered. “Well, then, no one will be allowed to enter carrying flowers.”<sup>32</sup> In Paulhan’s metaphorical usage these ‘flowers’ refer to rhetoric, made up of commonplace expressions, clichés, traditional genres, and other literary conventions. As the story goes, flowers brought into the park from the outside are excluded so as not to confuse them with ones that rightfully belong in the park. The sign prohibits all outside flowers from coming in because of the potential for someone to carry out a stolen one by insisting that they had carried it in. Through this metaphor, Paulhan shows the Terrorist authorities’ suspicion of the users of what ought to be the most public of gardens, that of language and literature. Paulhan presents the Terrorists as warders who seek to control and circumscribe the use of language. To them,

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<sup>29</sup> In French, *lieux communs* is a more precise and strictly literary term than commonplaces.

<sup>30</sup> “Qui veut définir les écrivains depuis cent cinquante ans, à travers mille aventures, par ce qu’ils n’ont cessé d’exiger, les trouve d’abord unanimes à *refuser* quelque chose.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 41; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> “IL EST DÉFENDU D’ENTRER DANS LE JARDIN AVEC DES FLEURS À LA MAIN.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 39; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> “Voici à peu près (je pense) ce qui s’est passé: une dame se promenait avec une rose. Le garde lui a dit: « Vous savez bien qu’il est défendu de cueillir des fleurs.—Je l’avais en entrant, a répondu la dame.—Eh bien, il sera défendu d’entrer avec des fleurs.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 49; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 16.

rhetorical embellishment in language is something that should be sternly guarded against.

Rhetorical language is prohibited from being brought into literature for fear it will ruin it. The possibility of mistaking clichéd language for original language, or to mistake a flower already in the park for one brought in from the outside, also implies that original and conventional language are not always easy to tell apart.

Terrorists are thus engaged in a twofold process of preventing rhetoric from ‘taking root’ in their writing and in ‘weeding out’ rhetoric from their writing. Literary Terror disdains rhetoric, seeing it as derivative, with no expressive force. They demand, instead, continuous invention and originality of expression. Consequently, during Paulhan’s time, the apparently trite moral clichés of “*a-man-who-will-stop-at-nothing, the-noble-career-of-the-military-man, the-corruption-of-evil*” and clichéd character traits, like “*suppressed-emotions, impeccable-style, elegant-thinking*,” for instance, are anathema.<sup>33</sup> The author of Rhetoric is seen as either lazy, relying on thoughts that have already been articulated instead of searching his or her own mind for new expressions, or as manipulated and constricted by language and as producing literature that is “too eloquent to be sincere” or “too nicely put to be true.”<sup>34</sup> The nineteenth-century French literary critic and historian, Ernst Renan, saw the whole classical tradition as “an abuse of rhetoric.”<sup>35</sup> Paulhan quotes Jules Renard as stating that “The art of writing today lies in mistrusting worn-out words.”<sup>36</sup> Stylistic conventions, stock characters, and common turns of phrase were vigorously denounced as deceptive, insincere and false. The author who used these was said to be making a

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<sup>33</sup> “*un-homme-que-n’arrête-aucun-scrupule, la-noble-carrière-des-armes, le-mal-cette-gangrène...émotion-contenue...style-impeccable, élégantes-pensées.*” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 54; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> “Trop éloquent pour être sincère...Trop bien dit pour être vrai.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 37; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> “un abuse de la rhétorique” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 67; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> “L’art d’écrire aujourd’hui, note Jules Renard, est de se défier des mots usés.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 42; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 10.

calculated use of language rules or to have had his or her thoughts unsettled by the power of literary conventions.

Above all, Terrorists claim that rhetoric impinges on one's ability to freely express thought. According to the Terrorist, the use of literary convention causes writers to yield to the "power of words," or the hold language has over ideas.<sup>37</sup> Paulhan quotes the French Symbolist poet, novelist and critic Remy de Gourmont as describing clichés as "Words trapped in the brain, as if in some dispensing machine, go straight from their boxes to the tip of the lip or of the pen, without any intervening conscience or sensibility."<sup>38</sup> This criticism accepts a clear division between words and ideas, holding up ideas as more authentic or closer to the truth than words. Words are then judged as unable to fully express ideas.<sup>39</sup> Paulhan writes that, within the logic of Terror, "clichés, in short, are a sign that language has suddenly overtaken a mind whose freedom and natural movement it has just constricted."<sup>40</sup> To the Terrorist, the commonplace represents a critical instance of thought being obscured by language. Linguistic rules and stylistic devices are conceived of as a hindrance to expression; they create debilitating boundaries within which thought can be expressed. Furthermore, Paulhan describes the Terrorist as ultimately believing that "as soon as [thoughts] are given linguistic form, they lose their essence and their value for us."<sup>41</sup> A Terrorist writer claims that the words he or she writes are fashioned by thought and criticizes the rhetorician because he or she structures thought by way of language. Language, for the Terrorist writer, is therefore essentially dangerous for thought: "Our mind is, at every point,

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<sup>37</sup> "Le pouvoir des mots" Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 56-57; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 22.

<sup>38</sup> "Les mots enfermés dans le cerveau comme dans un appareil de distribution passent directement de leurs cases au bout des lèvres ou au bout de la plume, sans aucune intervention de la conscience et de la sensibilité." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 56; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 75; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 34.

<sup>40</sup> "Bref, le cliché nous est signe que le langage soudain a pris le pas un esprit dont il vient contraindre la liberté, et le jeu naturel." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 55; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 20.

<sup>41</sup> "à peine entrent-ils en langage, perdent pour nous tout suc et tout prix." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 105; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 53.

oppressed by language.”<sup>42</sup> Plot devices and literary conceits were said to dictate thought through a process of trickery. Thought is seen as mistreated and betrayed by rhetoric; rhetoric subordinates thought to words.

Since the Romantic period, the avant-garde belief in the freedom of expression has manifested itself in art through claims to freedom of choice in subject matter and to freedom of choice in style. Breton’s statement—“The mere word ‘freedom’ is the only one that still excites me”—succinctly captures this impulse.<sup>43</sup> Paulhan finds the Terrorist conception of freedom most fully and radically articulated in the thought of the “anti-verbalist” Henri Bergson (1859-1941), who he designates as Terror’s “own philosopher.”<sup>44</sup> Bergson was one of the most influential French philosophers of the late 19th century-early 20th century, reaching cult-like heights during his lifetime. Moreover, his imprint on literature is undeniable. One of Bergson's main problems is to think of novelty as pure creation, instead of as the unraveling of a predetermined program. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), Bergson perceived intuition, the direct apprehension of process, or duration, as the discoverer of truth; intuition, not analysis, reveals the Absolute.<sup>45</sup> Gilles Deleuze claims that Bergson attempted “[t]o open us up to the inhuman and the superhuman (durations which are inferior or superior to our own), to go beyond the human condition: This is the meaning of philosophy, in so far as our condition condemns us to live among badly analyzed composites, and to be badly analyzed composites ourselves.”<sup>46</sup> But we find ourselves unable to separate duration from extensity or perception from memory.<sup>47</sup> Thus a conflict between what is real and what is knowable and, more to the point, what is knowable and

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<sup>42</sup> “L’esprit se trouve, à chaque moment, opprimé par le langage.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 70; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> “La Terreur trouve son philosophe” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 70; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Urzone, Inc, 1988), 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

what is expressible, is inherent in Bergson's philosophy.

Paulhan argues that Bergson's philosophy expressed a concept of a "confused, infinitely mobile, inestimable, irrational, delicate, and fugitive element, which language is incapable of grasping without arresting its mobility, nor without adapting it to its own banal form."<sup>48</sup>

Literature should serve as a guide to, or an inspiration for, or perhaps the rekindling of, this fleeting truth. Terror involved a sort of stripping away of rhetorical language, claiming the potential of revealing, or describing, or merely alluding to this intuitive truth. The purity and originality of primary intuition, of knowing without articulation in language, defined and inspired the methods and goals of Terrorist writers. In this situation, the merit of an author's work could only be judged by whether it "nurtures or ruins the only event that matters: the mind and its freedom."<sup>49</sup>

Paulhan writes that a "hidden trend in literature...demands of the poet, through some alchemy, another syntax, a new grammar, even forbidden words in which a sort of primitive innocence would come back to life, and some lost adherence of language to the things in the world."<sup>50</sup> Paulhan describes the tactics that Terrorist writers, such as Arthur Rimbaud, Guillaume Apollinaire, and James Joyce, use in their attempt to bypass or subdue the power of language to misrepresent thought and reproduce previous conceptions. The most common attempted escape from the effects of language involves the purgation of contaminated and exhausted expressions, making sure that their language is cleansed of commonplace expressions and rhetorical

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<sup>48</sup> "confus, infiniment mobile, inappréciable, sans raison, délicat et fugitif, que le langage ne saurait saisir sans en fixer la mobilité ni l'adapter à sa forme banale." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 71; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> "C'est à savoir si la littérature favorise ou bien ruine le seul événement qui importe: l'esprit et son libre jeu." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 79; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 36.

<sup>50</sup> "Un autre courant secret de la littérature...exige du poète, par quelque alchimie, une autre syntaxe, une grammaire nouvelle et jusqu'à des mots inédits où revivrait l'innocence primitive, et je ne sais quelle adhésion perdue du langage aux choses du monde." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 46; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 13.

strategies.<sup>51</sup> The assumption is that ‘pure’ language becomes corrupted through usage, and that the baggage of past literary doctrine and practice must be shed. Terrorists aspire to liberate art by eradicating pre-existing styles and forms. They attempt to remove instances of speech that could be read as clichéd, hoping that this will convey the unique and original representation of the writer’s ideas to the reader. They do so in attempts to impose freer ways of perceiving the world. Terrorists thus felt it necessary to unlearn old referential modes to change not merely the practice of writing but their perception of reality.

Terrorist writers attempt to break free of the bounds of rhetoric in order to produce writing that is uncontaminated and unshaped by pre-existing constraints. Paulhan demonstrates the great pains that Terrorist writers take to express their avoidance of common literary devices. One tactic used by the Terrorist author in an attempt to avoid rhetoric is to choose atypical subjects, presenting strange and neglected characters, like the rogue or the prostitute.<sup>52</sup> Another technique used to steer clear of rhetoric involves the author “being so originally personal he can only see or say things that are completely unexpected.”<sup>53</sup> Writing was increasingly seen, not as a formal expression of thought or theme, but as a quality, a way of seeing or feeling.<sup>54</sup> In this conception, the best writers are those who most distance themselves from predictable language and written forms in order to conceive of and convey a more profound and authentic expression, beyond expected language. For instance, Surrealist texts, which disconcert with their random juxtapositions of fact and fancy, are written as an intimate revelation. They thus claim sincerity by refusing all artifice. The author can therefore only be judged on his or her own terms, by “whether his nature, his temperament, the adventures he pursues, have allowed him to resist

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<sup>51</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 41-42; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 45; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 12-13.

<sup>53</sup> “l’écrivain tentera d’être lui-même personnel au point qu’il ne puisse rien voir, ou dire, que d’inattendu.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 44; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Coward, *A History of French Literature*, 236.

literature. In a word, whether he is authentic.”<sup>55</sup>

Paradoxically, “literature in general wishes to avoid nothing more than the literary.”<sup>56</sup> Another approach to achieving this authenticity that Paulhan defines is the detachment that a Terrorist writer claims from his or her text.<sup>57</sup> Although there are key differences between the movements, the author of the naturalist novel claims to be a recording device, merely observing reality; similarly, surrealist automatic writers claim that they freely let their minds go where they may, irrespective of the aesthetic effects they produce.<sup>58</sup> Paulhan argues that “in the former the writer disappears behind a human text, and in the latter behind a superhuman one.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, Émile Zola writes in *The Experimental Novel*, his treatise on the mechanistically determined novel and the need to subordinate fiction to the rigour of science,

The observer in him gives the facts as he has observed them, suggests the point of departure, displays the solid earth on which his characters are to tread and the phenomenon to develop. Then the experimentalist appears and introduces an experiment, that is to say, sets his characters going in a certain story so as to show that the succession of facts will be such as the requirements of the determinism of the phenomena under examination call for.<sup>60</sup>

Or, “An experimentalist has no need to conclude, because, in truth, experiment concludes for him.”<sup>61</sup> In another way, Breton’s definition of surrealism as “Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought” distances the Surreal writer/thinker from the form

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<sup>55</sup> “si sa nature, son tempérament, ses aventures lui permettaient de résister à la littérature. D’un mot s’il est *authentique*.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 60; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 23.

<sup>56</sup> “Et la littérature [ne se trouve rien tant éviter que] le littéraire.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 42; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 50; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 16.

<sup>58</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 47-48; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> “Simplement l’écrivain s’efface ici devant le document humain, là devant le document surhumain.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 48; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Zola, “The Experimental Novel,” 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

that the writing takes.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, he or she wrote in the moment, unreceptive to aesthetic considerations and revisions. Both methods resist judgment and responsibility.

In the context of the Garden of Literature, some Terrorist writers attempt to edge past the prohibition by attempting to enter the park with strange and exotic flowers, thereby claiming originality and difference. Others deny their authorial accountability, claiming that, without their knowledge, the rhetorical flowers must have fallen into their hair from the trees.<sup>63</sup> Both techniques of denial, through difference or through distance, absolve the writer from responsibility to his or her written work, creating an ‘alibi’ whereby the Terrorist “author establishes that, despite appearances, he is not the author.”<sup>64</sup> They deny their investments in rhetoric. Paulhan relates the following anecdote to illustrate this.

In the monastery of Assisi, there was a monk with a thick accent which reeked of his native Calabria. The other monks made fun of him. Now he was very sensitive, and after a while would only open his mouth when announcing an accident or misfortune, that is, some event that was in and of itself serious enough for the accent to have some chance of going unnoticed. However, he liked to talk, and began to invent catastrophes. Because he was honest he went so far as causing them to happen. And our literature likewise would not be so concerned about demanding that it be sensational, daring, and extravagant, if it did not want to make us forget that it is literature, which uses words and sentences. For this is its secret: Its words seem dangerous, and its accent intolerable.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 49; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 16.

<sup>64</sup> “L’auteur établit que, malgré l’apparence, il n’est pas un auteur.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 52; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> « Au monastère d’Assise, un moine avait un accent grossier, qui puait sa Calabre. Ses compagnons se moquaient de lui. Or, il était susceptible; il en vint à ne plus ouvrir la bouche que lorsqu’il s’agissait d’annoncer un accident, un malheur, enfin quelque événement en soi assez grave pour que son accent eût chance de passer inaperçu. Cependant, il aimait parler: il lui arriva d’inventer des catastrophes. Comme il était sincère, il alla jusqu’à en provoquer. Et notre littérature non plus n’exigerait pas avec tant de soin le sensationnel, la surenchère et l’audace, si elle ne voulait nous faire oublier qu’elle est littérature, qui use de mots et de phrases. Car il ne s’agit de rien d’autre dans son secret: ses paroles lui semblent dangereuses, et son accent odieux.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 62; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 24.

To Paulhan, the refusal to allow any ‘flowers’ of rhetoric into literature, the effort to topple a pre-existing and ‘stable’ linguistic system, essentially involves denying the very act of writing. It also denies something about the nature of language.

Thus, Paulhan shows that Terror operates within a number of contradictions, or optical illusions, that, ultimately reveal a dysfunctional relationship with language.<sup>66</sup> Although centred in a mistrust of language, Terrorist writers still write; they still express their ideas through words and produce literature. Indeed, Paulhan reveals that Terrorists, far from getting beyond formal language rules, are actually endlessly preoccupied and governed by rhetoric. He states that “no writer is more preoccupied with words than the one who is determined at every turn to get rid of them, to get away from them, or even to reinvent them.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, for instance, Breton, the founder, chief theoretician and presiding spirit of Surrealism, became such a ferocious and possessive guardian of its purity across the decades that he became known by disparagers as its “Pope.” In the context of Terror, what can be written is only what has not yet been written. For instance, Paulhan writes, “No sooner has a poet dispensed with *starry skies* than he has to wonder about the *sky* and about *stars*, which are apt to bring the expression back to mind...So one after another, every word is potentially suspect if it has already been used.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, “There was a time when it was poetic to say *waters*, *winged chariot*, and *eventide*. Today it is poetic not to say *waters*, *winged chariot*, and *eventide*.”<sup>69</sup> Freedom of expressing the inward mind is always threatened by a looming danger of conventional language. Paulhan argues that, incongruously, in an effort to get past conventions of language, Terrorist writers actually impose constraints on

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<sup>66</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 109; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 57.

<sup>67</sup> “il n’est pas d’écrivain mieux occupé des mots que celui qui se propose à tout instant de les pourchasser, d’être absent d’eux ou bien de les réinventer.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 139; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 76.

<sup>68</sup> “Le poète ne s’est pas plus tôt privé du *ciel étoilé* qu’il lui fait douter du *ciel* et de *l’étoile*, assez capables de le rappeler...Ainsi de proche en proche tout mot devient-il suspect s’il a déjà servi.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 46; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> “Il y a eu un temps où il était poétique de dire *onde*, *coursier* et *vespéral*. Mais ils est aujourd’hui poétique de ne pas dire *onde*, *coursier* et *vespéral*.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 41; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 10.

themselves and their ability to express ideas, and, thus, on the freedom that they hold so dear.

Paulhan claims that, far from escaping rhetoric, by writing, Terrorists create new common expressions, new linguistic tropes and literary formulas. A literary movement may be avant-garde at one time but, once a body of work has been created, it is no longer innovative. Romanticism certainly created its own literary types; the hero-artist, outcasts, and heaven-storming characters like Prometheus and Captain Ahab figure prominently in their writings. The writing of Victor Hugo, for instance, was seen by the avant-garde of the 1930s and 1940s as the epitome of rhetoric, but in his own day he was a rebel writer, or Terrorist.<sup>70</sup> The Surrealist “deviation from the norm is so regular and normal a fact that it is transformed into a canon no less exceptional than predictable.”<sup>71</sup> With time, Surrealism’s focus on childhood, the primitive, the strange, and the realist’s ‘prostitute’ and ‘rogue’ were no longer shocking or new, but became clichéd and commonplace. Outlaw writing becomes fashionable and then old-fashioned. What is modern has been constantly redefined as a reaction against the dominant literary ethos, on the inbuilt premise that the past corrupts and its traces in the present need to be purged.

Established through an anti-tradition stance, “to create a new world on the ruins of the old,” the present avant-garde develops its own system of conventions and becomes next year’s rhetoric; what glistens when new becomes hackneyed with age.<sup>72</sup> Their moment, too, will pass. Terror is therefore temporal and relates to the process of literature unfolding in time. It is, furthermore, a consequence of the use of language in time. Paulhan claims that Terror’s attempt to cleanse literature of rhetoric, and to transgress tradition, inexorably ends with the creation of a new rhetoric, a new reaction, and then a new Terror. Paulhan argues that, judged on their own terms, Terrorist writers are selectively blind to the ways in which their own ‘pure’ language is

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<sup>70</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 85-86.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>72</sup> Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, 8.

‘corrupted’ by usage. This blindness results in “sidestepping the need to defend oneself, rather than examining one’s reasons”<sup>73</sup> Paulhan consequently reveals Terror to be, in Allan Stoekl’s, phrase, “bad-faith rhetoric.”<sup>74</sup>

In Paulhan’s account, this dialectical transformation of Terror into Rhetoric does not occur because Terrorist writers are not careful enough; rather it is an inevitable consequence of Terror’s reactionary foundation and emphasis on innovation and novelty. Its methods—“That you need to be a daring creator and not care about rules...To say the opposite of what works of literature said in the past...To forget you are writing so that you can devote yourself, heart and soul, to the truth”—were widely, and in Paulhan’s estimation, blindly, accepted.<sup>75</sup> “Typical of the kinds of fairly short treatises that neither Maupassant nor Zola, Breton nor Aragon, Claudel nor Ramuz have taken beyond the limits of a decent preface,” the conclusions operate as the proof.<sup>76</sup> Terror makes claims for itself that it cannot support. Paulhan claims that it is “apparently free and bold, when it is in fact a slave; subtle, when it is crude; and lastly, effective, when it is inert. It is literature in its wild state, whereas it presents itself as the last word on progress.”<sup>77</sup> Thus Paulhan reproaches writers and critics

for addressing this essential question without due caution or sufficient evidence, for talking about it so lightly and, I fear, for coercing me into hasty support by taking

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<sup>73</sup> “Somme toute il s’agit d’esquiver la défense, plutôt que d’en examiner les raisons.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 49; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Allan Stoekl, *Agonies of the Intellectual: Commitment, Subjectivity, and the Performative in the Twentieth-Century French Tradition* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 150.

<sup>75</sup> “Qu’il faut être un audacieux créateur, et ne point se soucier des règles...Prendre le contre-pied des œuvres défuntes...Oublier que l’on écrit, pour se donner d’un cœur pur à la vérité.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 51; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> « Tout cela fait un genre de traités assez courts, que Maupassant ni Zola, Breton ni Aragon, Claudel ni Ramuz n’ont su porter au-delà des limites d’une honnête préface.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 51; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 17.

<sup>77</sup> “d’apparence libre et hardie, quand elle est esclave; subtile, quand elle est grossière; efficace enfin, quand elle est inerte. C’est la littérature à l’état sauvage, et qui se donne pour le fin mot du progrès.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 141; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 77.

advantage of the state of impatience and concern its presence throws me into; who would not rush to the aid of a thought that was being mistreated?<sup>78</sup>

That is not to say that Paulhan was conservative, or that he fancied a return to Classicism. Rather, he writes that “It’s not that I find the mystical possession of the intellectual—nor in earlier times the revolution—in the least bit contemptible. Far from it. I’m just suspicious of a revolt, or a dispossession, which comes along so opportunely to get us out of trouble.”<sup>79</sup> He writes that Terror “is certainly weak and unproven, and randomly condemns thousands of victims. This is because it uses a kind of blackmail in order to impose itself on us. It’s as if we were complicit with it, and it reminded us in tones about some corpse between us. We surrender to it before it has presented its evidence.”<sup>80</sup> We surrender because Terror’s judgment of literature points to a profound unease with language itself, revealing “a chronic illness of expression in general.”<sup>81</sup>

While “Terrorists want their language to be transparent, like a window ... its inevitable refracting, distorting quality reveals it to be of necessity rhetorical.”<sup>82</sup> Paulhan’s analysis reveals that conventional language is not so easy to escape, nor is authenticity and original expression so easy to attain as Terror would have it. Paulhan redeems the commonplace expression, the thousands of condemned victims, from the suggestion that it is some sort of substitute for thought, showing the tension and also the mutuality between originality, newness, and surprise, on the one hand, and familiarity, commonality, and stability, on the other. This is most

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<sup>78</sup> “Mais il me faut bien lui reprocher d’aborder cet essentiel sans précautions et sans preuves, d’en parler à la légère, et, je le crains, de profiter, pour m’arracher une adhésion hâtive, de l’impatience et de l’inquiétude où me jette sa présence: qui ne volerait au secours d’une pensée brutalisée.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 92; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 43.

<sup>79</sup> “Non que la possession mystique ou l’effacement du savant—ni plus haut la révolution—me semblent le moins du monde méprisables. Loin de là. Je me défie seulement d’une révolte, d’une dépossession qui viennent si bien à point nous tirer d’embarras.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 49; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> “Elle est certes légère et sans preuves, elle condamne, au petit bonheur, mille innocents. C’est qu’elle exerce sur nous, pour s’imposer, une sorte de chantage. Comme si nous étions de connivence avec elle, et qu’elle nous rappelât à mi-voix je ne sais quel cadavre entre nous. Nous lui cédonns avant qu’elle ait donné ses preuves.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 92; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 44.

<sup>81</sup> “une maladie chronique de l’expression” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 35; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 85.

successfully argued in his discussion of the relationship(s) between readers' impressions and writers' intentions. For example, an author who utilizes a commonplace expression may have intended to reinvent it as an original expression, or have conceived of it as an authentic means to convey his or her thoughts. Paulhan writes: "If I say that the morning is radiant, and that the clock struck midnight, it is true that I find myself talking like a book. But I didn't say these things in order to talk like a book. I said them because they are true."<sup>83</sup> Similarly, "Love letters are a good example of this: infinitely rich and exceptionally meaningful for the person writing or receiving them—but puzzling to an outsider because of their banality and (he will say) their verbalism."<sup>84</sup> Common expressions may also be repeated so often that their meaning is absolutely clear. In this case, the particular words disappear, revealing only the meaning contained in them; "these phrases become just like single words that we use—and the more widely used they are, the more they are just like all other words. Thus mysterious-langour becomes a variety of languor, the fiery brunette just another type of brunette, and the habit-which-governs, one of a thousand effects habit can have on us."<sup>85</sup>

Anna-Louise Milne considers that "the commonplace designates for Paulhan the point of tension in a theory of language between what is personal and what is shared, between what is creative and new and what is repetitive and traditional, between 'Terrorist' aesthetics and a rhetorical consciousness."<sup>86</sup> Commonplaces are shared forms of thought that can be transformed

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<sup>83</sup> "Si je dis que la matinée est radieuse, et que minuit sonne à l'horloge, je me trouve, il est vrai, parler comme un livre. Mais je ne l'avais pas dit *pour* parler comme un livre. Je le dis parce que c'est vrai." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 97; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 47.

<sup>84</sup> "C'est de quoi les lettres d'amour sont l'exemple: infiniment riches et d'un sens exceptionnel pour qui les écrit ou les reçoit—mais énigmatiques pour un étranger, à force de banalité, et (dira-t-il) de verbalisme. »Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 100; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 49.

<sup>85</sup> "Mais la locution ne forme qu'un mot dont on use—et plus il est commun—comme de tout autre mot. Ainsi la langueur-mystérieuse devient-elle une variété de langueur, la brune-piquante une espèce de brune; et l'habitude-qui-commande, l'une entre mille des actions que peut exercer sur nous l'habitude." Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 98; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 48.

<sup>86</sup> Anna-Louise Milne, "Jean Paulhan's Commonplace: The Genealogy of a Concept" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1999), abstract in *Dissertations & Theses: Full Text* <http://www.proquest.com.cyber.usask.ca> (accessed

into personal utterances. While a reader may understand commonplaces as ready-made expressions, they may have been expressed authentically. The intent of the author is therefore always read through the interpretation of the reader. Furthermore, it is the reader, not the writer of rhetoric, who is preoccupied with verbiage. Paulhan claims that the reader transfers onto the commonplace expression the feelings that they cause him or her to experience through the process of projection.<sup>87</sup> Writers may intend one thing by rhetorical aspects of their writing, but readers may translate this into something else. Thus, those rhetorical aspects are not necessarily, always and everywhere conservative or repetitive forces. They do not simply “repeat” culture. For instance,

A lover...says: ‘It’s as if I’ve known you forever. In what country, long ago...?’ and a politician: ‘The rising tide of democracy obliges us to...’ To which the undecided elector, or the object of the lover’s affection, replies: ‘What is he after? Does he believe what he’s saying? Or is he just trotting it out without thinking? If he imagines he’s going to convince me with his grandiose words...’<sup>88</sup>

One’s reaction to these statements depends on, for instance, one’s attitude towards the potential lover or towards politicians. The conveyance of meaning between transmission and reception is far from automatic or thoughtless. Readers and writers both possess and do not possess the meaning of commonplaces. This challenges, not only Terror’s assumptions about Rhetoric and its functions, but also their notions of literary originality and integrity.

This is especially clear in Paulhan’s discussion of “powerful words” in journalism. Phrases like “the youth of today” and “ideological warfare,” although considered the most common of commonplaces, have no fixed meaning; they change depending on who is saying them and who is hearing them, and the relationship between the two. Observation of literary

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December 27, 2008).

<sup>87</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 114-115; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 60-61.

<sup>88</sup> “Ainsi l’amoureux: « Il me semble vous avoir connue de tout temps. En quel pays, jadis...? »; ou le politique: « Le flot montant de la démocratie nous oblige... » A quoi l’électeur indécis, ou l’objet aimé: « Que va-t-il chercher là? Est-ce qu’il y croit? Ou est-ce qu’il répète ça au petit bonheur? S’il se figure qu’il va m’avoir avec ses grands mots... » Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 113; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 60.

statements is inseparable from the judgment brought to bear on it. While, for example, one person may see a particular word, such as ‘equality,’ as mere verbiage and illusion, someone else may see it as full of meaning, as

the very principle and truth by dint of which everything else appears as mere words and phrases: ‘Do you mean to say,’ the Christian asks the atheist, ‘that all I have to do in order to convince you is to mention the words Humanity, Nature, and Evolution? Can you really call it thinking if you subject yourself to these empty expressions?’ But the atheist replies: ‘I know of no other reality that could be more universal, or further from an empty expression than Nature and Evolution.’ ‘The word Liberty,’ said Novalis, ‘has produced millions of revolutionaries.’ No doubt: All those for whom Liberty was the opposite of a word.<sup>89</sup>

Appropriately presented as a maxim, Paulhan writes that “*An author’s thoughts are a reader’s words, and an author’s words are a reader’s thoughts.*”<sup>90</sup> There is a slippage within rhetorical language when the intention of the author becomes the impression of the reader. Meaning is created in this space between how words are used and how they are received.

Thus, in Paulhan’s estimation, commonplaces, far from being common and inane, are actually incredibly ambiguous and innovative terms. Commonplaces, what Maurice Blanchot called “monsters of ambiguity” in his influential response to *Flowers of Tarbes*, are actually the locus of deep-seated tensions within language and literature.<sup>91</sup> This reveals an inner contradiction not only in the inclination to Terror, but also within language itself. The distinction between thought and words is collapsed in Paulhan’s analysis. Paulhan shows thought and words to be mutually dependent. Like Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistics, Paulhan emphasizes the

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<sup>89</sup> “le principe et la vérité, au prix de quoi tout le reste apparaît mots et phrase: « Quoi, demande le chrétien à l’athée, suffit-il vraiment pour vous convaincre d’invoquer l’Humanité, la Nature, l’Évolution? Est-ce penser que se soumettre à ces formules creuses? » Mais l’athée: « Je ne sache pas de réalité plus universelle, et plus éloignée d’une formule que la Nature et l’Évolution. » Le mot de *Liberté*, disait Novalis, a fait des millions de révolutionnaires. Sans doute: tous ceux pour qui la Liberté était le contraire d’un mot.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 89-90; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 42.

<sup>90</sup> “*Pensée d’auteur, mots de lecteur: mots d’auteur, pensée de lecteur.*” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 116; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 62.

<sup>91</sup> Maurice Blanchot, “How is Literature Possible?” in *A Blanchot Reader*, ed. Michael Holland, trans. Michael Syrotinski (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995)

contingency of meaning; the relationship between signified and signifier is not fixed, but instead arises out of the interaction of signs across the linguistic system.<sup>92</sup> Both the stability and the “non-fixity” of language—what Saussure calls the mutability and immutability of language—are anchored in the arbitrary nature of the sign.<sup>93</sup> The relationship between signifiers and signifieds is both arbitrary and fluid, and, for Paulhan, commonplaces are “the place where we see a constant, obstinate attempt to create words.”<sup>94</sup> Language is always two-faced, both stable and open, Rhetorical and Terrorist. Paulhan reveals this endless back-and forth movement between terror and rhetoric as an inevitable function of language and literature.

Syrontinski argues that “we are left with a terror that can only ever be re-invented, and a rhetoric that never allows itself to be codified into any kind of literary convention. [Literature] is neither terror nor rhetoric, and both of them at the same time.”<sup>95</sup> Commonplaces are actually where Terror’s impulse towards innovation and freedom is most fully realized. Rhetoric is thus not opposed to Terror, but fundamental to it. Indeed, Paulhan states that “Terror’s only regret...is for the kind of feeling that it had at first attempted to destroy.”<sup>96</sup> As Terror purges Rhetoric it also becomes Rhetoric; as Rhetoric resists Terror, it also becomes Terror. Literature is only revealed, and able to exist, through, not despite, rhetoric.

Nevertheless, as co-existent strains within literature, Terror and Rhetoric equally face the task of imparting original meaning within a pre-existing system of communication.<sup>97</sup> Paulhan attempts to reconcile Terror and Rhetoric, and subdue their mutually purgative forms of linguistic violence, within a mutually agreed upon and sanctioned literary consensus. This new “unifying

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<sup>92</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 65-70.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-78.

<sup>94</sup> “L’on peut dire, en un sens, que nous assistons, à l’endroit du lieu commun, à une tentative constante, obstinée, pour créer des mots.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 99; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 48.

<sup>95</sup> Syrontinski, *Defying Gravity*, 92

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

myth” would prevent and curtail the incapacitating anxiety characteristic of Terror’s relationship with language. While Terrorist texts teach us that there is to be no resolution, no path back to the familiar world of language, Paulhan’s concept of Maintenance, or a re-envisioned Terror in protection of rhetoric, can be used as the means to form a less violent relationship with language. He calls for a reinvention of rhetoric which uncovers literature’s authenticity within its commonplaces, which have the potential for clear communication. “As difficult as commonplace expressions, ideas, and images can be, they at least come to us from a world that is not foreign;” they function within an existing literary and social community.<sup>98</sup> We write and talk to be understood.<sup>99</sup> The best way of producing good literature, Paulhan claims, is to accept rhetorical rules and then forget about them.

In this way, Paulhan claims, writers will be freer to express their thought; they will no longer be preoccupied with avoiding certain phrases and linguistic forms and will therefore be better able to communicate the meaning they desire. He writes that

The hand-rail that is erected at the edge of an abyss by a foresighted mayor could give a traveler the impression that his freedom is being infringed upon. The traveler is wrong, of course. All he would need to jump, if he really wants to, would be a little bit of energy. And in any case the hand-rail allows him to get closer to the abyss, and to see its every nook and cranny. Rhetoric is just the same. We may have the impression, from a distance, that its rules are going to guide a writer’s hand—that it holds him back, at any rate, from abandoning himself to the stormy emotions of his heart. But the fact that it allows him, on the contrary, to give himself up to them without restraint, since he is freed from the whole apparatus of language.<sup>100</sup>

A new, welcoming sign would be erected at the entrance to the Garden of Literature, reading “IT

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<sup>98</sup> “Le lieu commun, l’idée, l’image—si difficiles qu’ils nous puissent être—du moins ne nous viennent pas d’un monde étranger” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 122; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 66.

<sup>99</sup> Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 147-148; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 82.

<sup>100</sup> “La rampe qu’un maire prévoyant pose devant un gouffre peut donner au voyageur le sentiment d’une atteinte à sa liberté. Le voyageur se trompe, bien entendu. Il lui suffira d’un peu d’énergie, s’il y tient, pour se précipiter. Et la rampe lui permet en tout cas d’approcher le gouffre et de le voir jusqu’en ses recoins. Ainsi de la Rhétorique. L’on peut avoir, de loin, l’impression qu’elle va guider de ses règles la main de l’écrivain—qu’elle le retient, en tout cas, de s’abandonner aux tempêtes de son cœur. Mais le fait est qu’elle lui permet au contraire de s’y donner sans réserves, libre de tout l’appareil de langage qu’il risquait de confondre avec elles.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 154; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 85.

IS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER THE PARK WITHOUT CARRYING FLOWERS”<sup>101</sup> The rules are reversed: everyone should bring in flowers so that no one can be accused of picking them. This involves accepting clichés, not as banal and stupid, but as complex projections between and within readers and writers. As Milne states, commonplaces “are the place where the whole signifying system is challenged and, it is hoped, reconfirmed when agreement is reached over how the words in question are to be ‘taken’.”<sup>102</sup> Paulhan proposes creating a “self-reflexive zone” around commonplaces that acknowledge them as such. This allows the reader and the author to recognize that they are on the same side. He claims that “Clichés will be allowed to become citizens of Literature again the day they are at last deprived of their ambiguity, and their confusion. Now all it should require, since the confusion stems from doubt as to their nature, is simply for us to *agree*, once and for all, to take them as clichés. In short, we just need to *make* commonplaces *common*.”<sup>103</sup> Each common expression would be recognized as rhetorical and its meaning would be agreed upon: “In short, we would have substituted a shared Rhetoric ... for the dust of the different parties and individual rhetorics that Terror alludes to, in its solitude and anguish.”<sup>104</sup> Paulhan believes that we should become more aware of our language’s sources and functioning, not with the intention of purging what can be identified as borrowed or artificial, but with the aim of harnessing the past for our own creative purposes.

Paulhan declares that it is indeed an illusion to think that language can be stripped of fixed phrases, clichés, proverbs, and entrenched commonplaces. These are shared cultural

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<sup>101</sup> “IL EST DÉFENDU D’ENTRER DANS LE JARDIN PUBLIC SANS FLEURS À LA MAIN” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 166; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 93.

<sup>102</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 92.

<sup>103</sup> “Les clichés pourront retrouver droit de cité dans les Lettres, du jour où ils seront enfin privés de leur ambiguïté, de leur confusion. Or, il devrait y suffire, puisque la confusion vient d’un doute sur leur nature, de simplement *convenir*, une fois pour toutes, qu’on les tiendra pour clichés. En bref, il y suffit de *faire communs* les lieux communs.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 143; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 79.

<sup>104</sup> “En bref, l’on aurait substitué une rhétorique commune... à la poussière de partis et de rhétoriques personnelles que la Terreur invoque, dans la solitude ou l’angoisse.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 148; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 82.

references. To censure commonplaces is to call into question the power of language as a whole; by obliterating them in a frenzy of purifying zeal, we threaten the ability for language to communicate. As a remedy for this illusion that he sees as dragging the field of literature into endless cycles of purgation, Paulhan proposes a universal recognition of the contrived nature of language. The regulation of language, where commonplaces are agreed on and admitted into literature could encourage dialogue between the Terrorists and the Rhetoricians, provide positive relief from constant linguistic discord, and prevent abuses of linguistic power based on notions of purity.<sup>105</sup> This provocation to confrontation—not an ill-advised ideal of purity and authenticity—is the way that change in literature occurs. And, as we shall see, this is also the way that Paulhan thought that France could reckon with, and move forward from, its experience during the Occupation.

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<sup>105</sup> The conclusion that Paulhan reaches seems strange given his focus on the ambiguity of language, which shows that non-agreement between reader and writer is rooted in literature and language. In fact, his conclusion is *especially* ambiguous. He ends *Flowers of Tarbes* with the sentence “In fact, let’s just say I have said nothing.” Here he makes clear the reader’s role in determining the validity, meaning, and possibility of agreeing on commonplace expressions. This provides not just an illustration, but an enactment, of the dialogue Paulhan sees as more reflective of the ongoing process of language than settling on any one method or conclusion. Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 94.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESISTANCE, COLLABORATION, AND NATIONAL INTEGRITY

Drawing from his theory of language, Paulhan, particularly in the book *De la paille et du grain* [*Of Chaff and Wheat*] and the pamphlet *Lettre aux directeurs de la résistance* [*Letter to the Directors of the Resistance*], strenuously protested what he saw as the intellectual fallacies and insincere illusions underpinning the *épuration* of literary France. In *Of Chaff and Wheat* Paulhan writes “If I were a moralist or a politician, I suppose the cruelty of the purge would strike me first and foremost. But I’m just a grammarian, and so its hypocrisy does.”<sup>1</sup> As with his interrogation and critique of the impulse to Terror in literature, and the tensions he meant to expose between Terrorist theory and the practice of writers, Paulhan attempted to locate and expose the “lies, errors, and contradictions” within the rationalization of the purge in both the conduct of the CNE and in the very functions and limits of language, in the duplicity and instability of expression and communication.<sup>2</sup> Just as it is untenable to attempt to purify a superstructure of language, always weak and at risk, the purification of national community is, to Paulhan, not only undesirable but constitutionally impossible. Attempts at either aesthetic or political purification in the realm of literature and language accentuated the potential for a breakdown of meaning.<sup>3</sup> Paulhan’s writing about the purge consequently illuminates and stretches his linguistic theory, while, at the same time, it proposes a distinctive social and literary ethics based on the sort of indeterminacy of

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<sup>1</sup> “Si j’étais moraliste ou politique, c’est, je crois, la cruauté de l’épuration qui me frapperait d’abord. Mais je ne suis guère qu’un grammairien, et c’est son hypocrisie.” Jean Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 108; Jean Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat: Writers, War, and Treason*, trans. Richard Rand (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 41.

<sup>2</sup> “les mensonges, les erreurs, les contradictions” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 90; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> Paulhan conflates and blurs the lines between literature, writing, and language. Thus, in his struggle against the purges, Paulhan writes about journalistic, even propagandistic, writing with the same theories that he uses to describe creative and imaginative literature in *Flowers of Tarbes*. The possible differences in intention, effect, and clarity of meaning between the genres are not acknowledged. In this way, literature, in Paulhan’s usage, simply denotes something that has been written.

meaning inherent in his ideas about language.

Implicit in Paulhan's ideas is the argument that the act of purification, of language or of France, relies on a definite and reductive conception of "pure." Like Terrorists, Paulhan saw those who advocated the post-war purges of writers as imbued with a notion of their own morality and convinced of their own rectitude and of the deviance of others. He presents them as seeking total and even totalitarian control over thought and expression through the excising of corrupting influences. Paulhan's dispute with those encouraging the blacklist centres on what he saw as a deceptive and false deployment of the key terms of the debate promulgated by the CNE. He argues that the justification of the *épuration* of intellectuals relied on a fundamentally misconstrued interpretation of patriotism, treason, collaboration, and resistance. As used by the CNE, each of these terms, in historical context and linguistic reading, are embedded in what is to Paulhan a disingenuous and dangerous postwar meaning of "nation." As employed by the CNE, the apparent reinstatement of a unified and authentic France was to be built on the consequent eradication of any discourse that could be construed as contrary to a particular vision of a "true" France.

Paulhan saw the purge as a program which, on both the civic and linguistic levels, sought to efface and deny disturbing difference within French literature in the name of patriotism and political stability. In *Flowers of Tarbes*, Paulhan maintains that Terrorist authors theorize the establishment of pure expression that is not bound to the past. But this progressive liberation has its dark side in the writers' unwillingness to include certain forms of language in their idea of literature. Terrorist conceptions of free and pure literary expression thus rely upon the suppression of other modes of communication. Similarly, during the purge the Resistance writers' visions of a unified national and literary community rested on the expulsion of elements perceived as exceptions or threats to their limited conception of France. As such, Paulhan argues

that the members of the CNE attempted to institute literary and national virtue by means of a type of terror – in both the political and linguistic sense. In each case, the foundation and maintenance of literature in post-war France was, to Paulhan, predicated on the imposition of discursive constraint. But, just as all language consists of some rhetoric and some terror, Paulhan regards the nation as made up of different ideological positions. He holds that both the integrity of literature and the health of France depend less on the deceptive appearance of common agreement than on the unencumbered proliferation of all opinions, however divergent, dangerous, mistaken, or mutually contradictory they may be. Dissident discourse and a sound nation can, in fact, coexist. For Paulhan, the democratic nation is developed by and relies on candid debate. Paulhan's contentious position is based on the duplicity and ambivalence and the stability and change that he saw as inherent to the nation and to language.

Paulhan initially spoke out against the blacklist in the fall of 1944, at the first public meeting of the CNE, and he tendered his resignation from the committee in 1946. Without displaying indulgence towards the collaborationist writers, he attempted to undo the credo of the writer's responsibility that had, to him, become a new kind of dogma. Both *Of Chaff and Wheat* and *Letter to the Directors of the Resistance* recount Paulhan's responses to the CNE's blacklisting activities and the consequent, often personal and acrimonious, quarrels they provoked. In both texts, the reader is invited to witness what Richard Rand calls Paulhan's "open mail to other parties."<sup>4</sup> The books are not only records of his arguments, but also of the denunciations against him and his responses to these attacks. The reader is thus drawn into the debate, to moments within the dispute orchestrated by Paulhan.<sup>5</sup> *Of Chaff and Wheat* is comprised of extracts of articles that Paulhan published in a variety of journals between 1946 and

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<sup>4</sup> Rand, "Introduction" to *Of Chaff and Wheat*, xxvi.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

1948, as well as original material.<sup>6</sup> The structure of this book is characteristically odd and ambiguous; like the argument presented in *Flowers*, it is not straightforward, chronological, or systematic. He begins this work as a writer without a consuming political passion. The first two parts of the book are devoted to language, and they discuss such diverse topics as the state of the French language, the joys and mysteries of literature, family reunions, and the card game of bridge. The importance of these seemingly benign and apolitical passages to the subject of the blacklisting only becomes clear as one reads further, and, even then, the linkages remain indefinite. At the end of the Second part, Paulhan, and the reader, are “violently interrupted,” and what follows is a much more directed attack on the CNE, where he abruptly shifts to present his “seven letters to the white writers [what he calls the blacklisters],” explicitly addressing politics, patriotism, treason, and the purge. Paulhan also presented his argument and responds to the CNE’s replies in *Lettre aux directeurs de la résistance* [*Letter to the directors of the Resistance*], a fifteen page pamphlet published in the December 1949 issue of *Liberté de l’Esprit*. It was first published in book form by Éditions de Minuit in 1952, a time when debates surrounding the amnesty of collaborators were at their most heated.<sup>7</sup>

In both texts, Paulhan raised his voice against the backdrop of the jubilation of a resurgent French nationalism and a renewed—to him, false—sense of national unity. Paulhan disputes the claims to patriotism and national purification that upheld the moral and legal validation of the purge of intellectuals. Paulhan argues that the term nation is one which lends itself to inevitable misunderstandings. In both the laws governing the purges, and the language governing the CNE’s position, it was France that was betrayed by traitors and France that was defended by patriots.

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<sup>6</sup> These articles appeared in *Les Temps Modernes*, *Les Lettres Françaises*, *Les Nouvelles Épitres*, *Carrefour*, *Combat*, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, *Gavroche*, *Les Cahiers du Sud*, *Les Cahiers de la Pléiade*, and *La Table Ronde*.

<sup>7</sup> *Autour de la Lettre aux directeurs de la résistance de Jean Paulhan* presents a selection of reactions to the publication of the letter. Jean Paulhan, *Autour de la lettre aux directeurs de la résistance de Jean Paulhan*, ed. J. E. Flower (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003)

France is treated as a given and unproblematic word, one which has a single meaning. The “CNE swear never to forsake ‘the principles that carried *France* to the Forefront of nations’” and to seek justice for an “irreparable crime, an irreversible injury done to the *nation*.”<sup>8</sup> In the *Letter to the Directors of the Resistance*, in particular, Paulhan focuses on Article 75 of the Penal Code, which defined treason and which was used to punish collaborators. He writes of it as exemplary in its clarity of language, avoiding indefinite and clearly conceptual words such as “honour,” opting instead for less ambiguous words like “weapons.”<sup>9</sup> However, each point in the Article, for Paulhan, is obfuscated by the inclusion of one indefinable and ceaselessly contentious word: France. For Paulhan, the meaning of France, and thus what it would mean to betray or defend it, is far from clear, and far from agreed upon.

Like any word, Paulhan says, France is an entity at once material and ideal. He writes in the *Letter to the Directors of the Resistance*:

What is France? Of Course [sic], it is not a question here of a country in the sense of geography (mountains and streams couldn't care less if they were betrayed). Or of a pretty girl with a Phrygian bonnet (no, no more than England is a lion, or the United States an uncle). Nor is it a question—in any case, it is not just a question—of the eldest daughter of the Church (according to Massillon). Nor of the Christ among the Nations (according to Quinet). Nor of the Paradise of Initiative (according to Maurras). Nor of the France of the Revolution (or the France of Kings). France, in short, is no less difficult to define than man.<sup>10</sup>

Paulhan divides France into two indivisible components; “la France charnelle,” or the land itself

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<sup>8</sup> “les membres du CNE s’engagent à ne jamais désavouer ‘les principes qui ont porté la France à la pointe des nations’” “le «crime irréparable, le tort irréversible, fait à la nation »” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 65-66, 100; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 25, 38. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>9</sup> Paulhan, *Autour de la lettre aux directeurs de la résistance*, 45; Jean Paulhan, “Letter to the Directors of the Resistance,” in *On Poetry and Politics*, eds. Jennifer Bajorek, Eric Trudel and Charlotte Mandell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 134.

<sup>10</sup> “Qu’est-ce que c’est que la France? Bien sur, il ne s’agit pas ici d’un pays au sens de la géographie (les montagnes et les ruisseaux se fichent pas mal qu’on trahisse). Ni d’une jolie fille à bonnet phrygien (non, pas plus que l’Angleterre n’est un lion, ni les États-unis un oncle). Il ne s’agit pas non plus—en tout cas, il ne s’agit pas seulement—de la fille aînée de l’Église (selon Massillon). Ni du Christ des Nations (selon Quinet). Ni du Paradis de l’Initiative (selon Maurras). Ni de la France de la Révolution (ou de celle des rois). La France, somme toute, non moins difficile à définir que l’homme.” Paulhan, *Autour de la lettre aux directeurs de la résistance*, 46; Paulhan, “Letter to the Directors of the Resistance,” 134.

and “la France spirituelle,” or the cause of France.<sup>11</sup> The nation is at once embodied in geographical boundaries and formed by a sense of community based around purely inventive and imaginative identification.<sup>12</sup> The two components are not the same, but they cannot exist independently.

In this way, the relationship between the land of France and the cause of France is akin to the relationship between words and thought that Paulhan describes in *Flowers of Tarbes*. He writes

There exists, therefore, a mystery of the homeland, like the mysteries of language and Letters. Who knows, a neighbouring mystery, no doubt. Because confusing the bodily homeland with the spiritual homeland, in order to recognize only *one* homeland, may not be so different from confusing words with ideas. It's the very same absurdity.<sup>13</sup>

Language consists of words and ideas; the nation consists of physical boundaries and symbolic associations. A word is not an idea, but the idea and the word cannot be separated. The constant form and fluid content of language is what accounts for its existence as both stable and innovative. France, too, is at once a convention and the vehicle for unique interpretation. It means everything and it means nothing. It is artificial and authentic. And, “as long as you stay naïve, you won't keep that mystery from happening, or stop being astonished by it: sending words into the air, watching them turn into thoughts.”<sup>14</sup> The ability for language to work, to express and communicate, relies on faith not reason, innocence not sophistication. This is the mysterious paradox that Paulhan sees at the heart of language and of patriotism.

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<sup>11</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 115.

<sup>12</sup> This conception of nation anticipates Benedict Anderson's argument that the nation is a community socially constructed, or imagined, by the people who identify with it. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> “C'est donc qu'il existe un mystère de la patrie, comme il en est un des langues, et des Lettres. Qui sait, un mystère voisin sans doute. Car enfin confondre le pays charnel et le pays spirituel, pour n'y voir enfin qu'une patrie, ce n'est pas si différent de prendre les mots pour des idées.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 125; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> “Et, pour peu que l'on soit resté naïf, on n'arrête pas de faire jouer ce mystère, et de s'en étonner: de lancer en l'air des mots, pour les voir se transformer en idées.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 31; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 10.

He repeatedly makes the claim that the CNE is hiding their partisan and powerful position behind an exaggerated and smug patriotism that is as incoherent as it is irresponsible. He implies that the Resistance writers divided literary history into two groups of writers, patriots and traitors, appropriating the first, denouncing the second. Throughout *Of Chaff and Wheat*, Paulhan recounts traitorous or would-be traitorous writers of the past admired by the same members of the CNE who were now referring to their love of France as the motive for the purification of literature. He demonstrates that, if judged by the criteria of the blacklist, many celebrated writers of the past would be traitorous as well. Arthur Rimbaud, who “wanted to see the Ardennes squeezed by the Germans!” during the Franco-Prussian war (1870-71) and Romain Rolland, who deserted France during the First World War and published antiwar and anti-French sentiments in *Above the Battle* (1913), both widely admired, defended, and even championed as writers by members of the CNE, had, nonetheless and in different wars, betrayed the cause of France.<sup>15</sup> To Paulhan, the CNE’s attempt to convert anti-patriots of the past into lovers of France relies on tricks and lies, so obvious as to be absurd. For instance, he accuses Aragon of blatantly ignoring aspects of Rimbaud’s writing that could be conceived of as treasonous: “he knows very well he lies. An odd lie: naïve, because quite a few of us still read Rimbaud; impudent, because [Rimbaud’s] tract itself can still be found in libraries.”<sup>16</sup> This false-hearted repatriation of writers who at one time denounced their allegiance to France is inconsistent with the CNE’s treatment of

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, Paulhan quotes Rolland’s *Above the Battle*: “We gave up our sons. Fine for anyone who believes in that vicious, envious, old idol caked in clotted blood—the barbaric homeland. But for those who no longer believe, those who only want to believe (It is I! It is we!) while sacrificing their sons—they give them up to a *lie*, they give them up to prove their *lie* to themselves.” “Nous avons livré nos fils. Passe encore pour ceux qui croient à la vieille idole hargneuse, envieuse, poissée de sang caille—la patrie barbare. Mais ceux qui ne croient plus, qui seulement veulent croire (Et c’est moi! C’est nous!) en sacrifiant leurs fils, ils les offrent à un *mensonge*, ils les offrent pour se prouver à eux-mêmes leur *mensonge*.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 53, 69-71, 101-102; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 19, 27, 39.

<sup>16</sup> “il sait très bien qu’il ment. Drôle de mensonge: naïf, car nous sommes tout de même quelques-uns à lire Rimbaud; impudent, car le tract se trouve encore dans les Bibliothèques.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 87 Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 33.

contemporary writers whom they deemed treasonous. And, to Paulhan, this tactic suggests political ruse.

Moreover, Paulhan argues that the anti-patriotic writers of the past include those, like Claude Morgan, Julian Benda, Paul Eluard, and Aragon, now spearheading the blacklist:

M. Claude Morgan, answering in the *Lettres*, assures me that he loves his homeland, that he adores it, that he's a super patriot, and that others are terrible anti-patriots. I never doubted it. I mean that I never doubted his answer. Because this is 1947. In 1940 he would have told me...that a communist doesn't have a homeland. In 1935, with Aragon, that France is the vermin of the world.<sup>17</sup>

He cites Julien Benda, who “would have regarded collaboration... as a gift from the gods, had Germany only supplied a regime superior to our own.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, prior to the Occupation, those who were now accusing others of unpatriotic writings had themselves exhibited, by their own definition, anti-patriotic tendencies. Paulhan objected to what he perceived as the CNE's duplicitous blindness to the conflict within its own moral and political stance. He focuses on the communists amongst the CNE. Paulhan questions their entitlement to define ‘true France’ and call themselves patriots. He writes in *Of Chaff and Wheat*: “What a strange adventure: France was almost brought to ruin by men who prayed every day to the goddess France; it was saved by (among others) men who tossed the French Army every day into the waste basket.”<sup>19</sup> To Paulhan, collaboration with the Nazis was equivalent to effective collaboration with the Soviet Union. His argument is that each resistant is a potential collaborator; the collaborator and the *résistant* of the Second World War differ only in that one has been procured by Germany, the other by the Soviet

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<sup>17</sup> “M. Claude Morgan, qui me répond dans les Lettres, m'assure qu'il aime sa patrie, qu'il l'adore, qu'il est un super-patriote, que les autres sont d'affreux anti-patriotes. Je n'en doutais pas. Je veux dire que je ne doutais pas de sa réponse. C'est que nous sommes en 1947. En 1940, il m'eût répondu...qu'un communiste n'a pas de patrie. En 1935, avec Aragon, que la France est la vermine du monde.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 109-110; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> “la collaboration pour un bienfait des dieux, si l'Allemagne nous avait apporté un régime meilleur que le nôtre.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 114; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> « Quelle étrange aventure: la France a failli être ruinée par des hommes qui priaient chaque matin la déesse France; elle a été sauvée (entre autres) par ceux qui jetaient chaque jour l'armée française au panier.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 124-125; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 47.

Union.

Literary critic Jeffrey Mehlman writes that

The great paradox of World War II was that the national resistance to foreign occupation was the achievement of an ideological group that had long been denigrating all national values with a view toward a future Collaboration – with the Russians. In addition, the Collaborators with the Germans were a group that had long been training as future Resistance fighters – against the Russians.<sup>20</sup>

As Richard Vinen states in his study of the reconstruction of French conservative parties and bourgeois interests in the period between 1945 and 1951: “[t]alk of the Communists’ inactivity at the start of the Occupation and allegations of Communist attempts to fraternize with the Germans was common...in the early years of the Fourth Republic.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, French Communists had sided with the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. Only after Hitler’s June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union did the French Communist party fully commit to the Resistance. To Paulhan, this highlights the impracticality of establishing a clear difference, either morally or politically, between the collaborators and their judges. This is why he objects so strenuously to the victors’ tendency to rewrite the war in view of its outcomes.

Watts argues that Paulhan’s “use of analogy [between Communists and fascist collaborators] ended up in a sort of ideological scrambling in which white was black, black was white, and both terms were neutralized.”<sup>22</sup> This correspondence between Communists and collaborators was something of a stock argument also used by the right to defend Nazi collaboration following liberation. Watts argues that the assertion that the French Communists were traitors could be found in almost every text defending Vichy and the collaboration.<sup>23</sup> For instance, like Paulhan, in his book *Au nom des silencieux* (1945) the collaborationist journalist

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<sup>20</sup> Mehlman, “Writing and Deference: The Politics of Literary Adulation”: 6.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Vinen, *Bourgeois Politics in France, 1945-1951* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 111.

<sup>22</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 50.

<sup>23</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 48.

Alfred Fabre-Luce wrote that the Communist Aragon had made many unpatriotic, collaborationist statements during the First World War.<sup>24</sup> This clearly deflected collaborationist guilt.<sup>25</sup>

Paulhan, though, is coming at his argument from a particular perspective on language. He sees a Terrorist dynamic at work in the purge. As argued in *Flowers of Tarbes*, in literature, any straining after an adequate language, a pure language, only results in more commonplaces.<sup>26</sup> To Paulhan, the constant vacillation and reversibility between Terror and Rhetoric, driven by a quest for purity of expression, is comparable to the repetition of historical errors of the Resistance and their enemies, also propelled by the pursuit of purity. Syrotinski rightly states that “the members of the CNE were very certain of their position on the moral spectrum, and indeed their ability to discriminate depended on the establishment of just such a spectrum. For Paulhan, however, the ethical ‘colours’ are by no means allotted once and for all.”<sup>27</sup> In *Of Chaff and Wheat*, Paulhan recounts an imaginary, but very familiar, story about two antagonistic parties, the Reds and the Whites.<sup>28</sup>

Then a war really does come, and no one can say that the Reds, or for that matter the Whites, do it with any brilliance. The great leader of the Reds begins by deserting (to a foreign country). The great leader of the Whites does pretty much the same (to the interior); and there he gains, with our enemy’s help, an opportunity to massacre more than a few Reds. . . . But the country finds itself liberated. . . . The Reds are returned to power, and it’s time to exterminate a few Whites. No problem for them: they have the power. Ah, but that’s not enough, they also want the right. What right? The laws, they say, are clear—Let’s talk about them. Those are the same laws that have been crushing you for the past five years.—Those Whites betrayed the homeland!—Given the chance, you would have agreed to betray it too. So tell the truth. You

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Anne Simonin and James F. Austin discuss how the collaborationist *Opposition Nationale* claimed a “right to innocence” by partially drawing from Paulhan’s arguments. Anne Simonin and James F. Austin, “The Right to Innocence: Literary Discourse and the Postwar Purges (1944-1953),” *Yale French Studies* 98 (2000): 5-28.

<sup>26</sup> Milne, “Jean Paulhan’s Commonplace,” 103.

<sup>27</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> These factions would have been recognized as Communists and, if not Fascists, then at least Capitalists (“these people who stuffed our heads full of their patrie! A patrie made up of their small stocks, their portfolios, and their trust funds.”) Pétain, De Gaulle, the Nazi Occupiers, and the Resistance are clearly identifiable, as well. Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 110-112; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 42.

exterminate them for being Whites.<sup>29</sup>

Like Terrorist writers' treatment of commonplaces, the means by which the CNE approaches collaborationist writers only creates what it is trying to eliminate, a state of literature governed by repression and violence. Just like Terror, which, through its own rules tends to produce Rhetoric, the Resistance already contains the potential to become that which it guards against. To Paulhan, each *résistant* is a potential collaborator.

For Paulhan, then, it is not collaboration, per se, or treason, per se, that the CNE dispute. Rather, their concerns are partisan; they are motivated not by their love of France, but by their hatred for fascists. He writes: "So why do you blame those other collaborators... whose massacre you demand? For having betrayed their homeland? No, since you... were ready to betray it. In effect, for admiring a regime that makes you vomit."<sup>30</sup> Paulhan is in full agreement that the fascist regime was repulsive. The writers of the *CNE* have a legitimate right to their disgust. They are entitled to choose their friends and their enemies and to decide whether or not they want to be published alongside particular writers. Paulhan sees these as valiant, modest, and democratic decisions. But, with the creation of the blacklist and the existence of the trials, these modest decisions "turned into a pretentious verdict: [the] democratic measures into a fascist sentence," "their feelings into eternal judgements, their memories into sanctions—their mystique into

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<sup>29</sup> "Là-dessus, la guerre arrive pour de bon, et personne ne peut dire que les Rouges, ni d'ailleurs les Blancs, y soient très brillants. Le grand chef des Rouges commence par désertre (à l'étranger). Le grand chef des Blancs en fait à peu près autant (à l'intérieur); il en profite, d'accord avec notre ennemi, pour massacrer pas mal de Rouges... Cependant la patrie se voit libérée (avec l'aide de quelques armées étrangères). Les Rouges reviennent au pouvoir, c'est leur tour d'exterminer un peu les Blancs. Libre à eux: ils ont la force. Ah, mais ça ne leur suffit pas, ils veulent encore avoir le droit. Quel droit?—Les lois, disent-ils, se prononcent...--Parlons-en. Ce sont les mêmes lois, qui vous accablent depuis cinq ans.—Ces Blancs ont trahi la Patrie!—Vous conveniez vous-mêmes de la trahir, le cas échéant. Avouez donc la vérité. Vous les exterminerez parce qu'ils sont blancs." Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 111-112; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> "Que reprochez-vous... à ces collaborateurs, dont vous exigez le massacre? Est-ce d'avoir trahi leur patrie? Non, si vous étiez prêt vous-même à la trahir. C'est d'admirer un régime, que vous vomissez." Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 114; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 43.

politique.”<sup>31</sup> The Resistance writers do not have the right to define France, once and for all; to act with the power of judges; or to control what can and cannot be included in literature.

The CNE hung much of its authority, and the power to define what is legitimate and illegitimate literature, on the prestige commanded by its authors’ Resistance record. The majority of Paulhan’s opponents in the scandal surrounding the literary purges came out of their resistance experience with a fixed sense of themselves and the values that they had defended.<sup>32</sup> The identification between the defence of the values of the French ‘spirit’ and the fight for liberty became the meaning given to the intellectual Resistance and provided the grounds for its legitimacy.<sup>33</sup> For them, the war, and their experience in the Resistance, was determinant and marked a break in both France’s and their personal histories. From here they were well-positioned to deliver the “verdict of history.”<sup>34</sup>

The Resistance’s emphasis on persuasion and the drawing of clear battle-lines, and its clear engagement as a purposeful ‘weapon’ against the Occupation, was something that Paulhan actively served by his writing and his editorial support of Resistance writers. However, rather than seeing his experience in the Resistance as determining his identity, as many of his colleagues did, Paulhan understood these years to have been both a trauma and an opportunity. Paulhan claims that you do not remain resistant by virtue of having been resistant.<sup>35</sup> To him, the years of Occupation highlighted the impermanence and fragility of identity. The Resistance was not founded on a sense of political destiny; they were solely acting against a regime that they abhorred. Their action was essentially reactive and resistant. In this sense it had no expected or

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<sup>31</sup> “votre décision modeste s’est transformée, par la malice des hommes, en verdict prétentieux; votre mesure démocratique, en sentence fasciste,” «leur humeur en arrêts éternels, leurs souvenirs en sanctions—leur mystique en politique.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 57, 96; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 20, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 101.

<sup>33</sup> Sapiro, “Literature and Politics,” 162.

<sup>34</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 189.

<sup>35</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 98-99.

coherent end. Paulhan writes of the Resistance: “Far from being righteous all his life, [the member of the Resistance] took the infinite risk of becoming unrighteous: of finding he had become, overnight, a swine.”<sup>36</sup> To Paulhan, the members of the Resistance who advocated the purge had become swine. Although the Resistance had adhered to a set of egalitarian and democratic ideals in opposition to Vichy’s moral revolution and Nazi authoritarianism, their actions after the war, to Paulhan, had become morally comparable to those of the occupier and Vichy regimes.

The error of the CNE, Paulhan argues, is that it adopted the tactics of the Nazis in relation to its own traitors. Undoubtedly, under Nazi Occupation and collaborationist Vichy rule literary culture was an important instrument of ideological domination and control, further deepening the fractures of a defeated and divided society. The field of legitimate cultural production was a spectrum of right-wing positions, from ultranationalist to pro-European fascist collaborators. Paulhan is arguing that the power of the writers on the CNE and the repressive and authoritarian tactics of the purge also created de facto censorship of French literature. Paulhan writes:

I have great respect for judges and policemen. I suppose they’re necessary, I’ve even come to admire them (I don’t belong to those anarchists who would want writers exempted from every law). But, finally, I’m not one of them: No. Nor a politician. I lack the necessary qualities – along with the defects, I believe. The conscience of humanity (as the CNE calls it) isn’t my thing. Any more than the supplementary police force that Charles Maurras demanded so loudly – the one you’ve found. You found it. But were you looking for it?<sup>37</sup>

Paulhan felt that the CNE had become a Communist front organization exercising hegemonic

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<sup>36</sup> “Loin d’être juste pour toute la vie, il risquait infiniment de devenir injuste: de se retrouver, du jour au lendemain, un salaud.” Paulhan, *Autour de la lettre aux directeurs de la résistance*, 43; Paulhan, “Letter to the Directors of the Resistance,” 132.

<sup>37</sup> Maurras was the leader of the *Action Française*, a nationalist, monarchist, and right-wing group. He supported the Vichy regime and his writing before and during the Occupation was often violent in its hatred of Jews and the Resistance. During the purge trials, he was found guilty of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment in January 1945. “J’ai grand respect pour les juges et les hommes de la police. Je suppose qu’ils sont nécessaires, il m’arrive de les admirer (je ne suis pas de ces anarchistes qui veulent que l’écrivain ne relève d’aucune loi). Mais enfin je n’en suis pas un. Non. Ni même un homme politique. Je n’ai pas les qualités qu’il y faut—ni les défauts, je pense. La conscience humaine (comme dit le CNE), ce n’est pas moi. Ni cette gendarmerie supplémentaire, que réclamait à grands cris Charles Maurras—et que vous avez trouvée. Vous l’avez trouvée. Mais est-ce que vous la cherchiez.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 54-55; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 19.

control over French literature.<sup>38</sup> He repeatedly refers to the members of the CNE as “judges” and “moralists.” The writer was to be subordinated to a partisan conception of the nation, and opposing political and cultural expression was to be suppressed. In an article that presented Paulhan as a much needed defender of intellectual freedom, the Swiss journal *Le Fribourgeois* argued that in France

engagement has become obligatory. In fact, a sort of *intellectual dictatorship* had been put in place by the so-called parties of the Resistance and a *monopoly over the means of expression* had been carefully organized to benefit these parties. No more reviews, no more newspapers for those who would not obey the new orthodoxy!<sup>39</sup>

Paulhan presented the CNE’s actions as an intellectual coup d’état, exercising centralized control over literary expression.

As well, reflexively reproducing the strategy of the fascists, the CNE located the danger outside of an otherwise untroubled national community. They acted as if French writers “could have greeted the Nazis only by surrendering [their] native identity” and aiding a categorically foreign power.<sup>40</sup> The purge treated collaboration as a virus, foreign to the body politic, and national purity as a question of medical hygiene. This partisan conception of purity, in Paulhan’s analysis, had formed the basis for a certain society, built upon and enmeshed within an absolutist discourse of nation and a definite idea of France. Whether they faced the charge of treason or of national indignity, the writers were indicted for having promoted aspects of Nazi ideology, such as anti-communism, anti-Semitism, support for the *relève* system, support for the Milice, and

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<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in his discussion of the purge trials in the “Letter to the Directors of the Resistance,” Paulhan writes that “Communists made up the majority in most of the law courts. Even when they didn’t make up the majority, they were the ones who gained authority over the others, and imposed their points of view; they were the ones with demands... The Party had told them so. The Republic seemed to repeat it to them. They condemned. With all their might. They were unyielding. But were they just?” “En fait, les communistes formaient la majorité dans la plupart des Cours de Justice. Alors même qu’ils ne formaient pas la majorité, c’est eux qui prenaient autorité sur les autres, imposaient leurs vues; c’est eux qui exigeaient... La Parti le leur avait dit. La République semblait le leur répéter. Ils condamnaient. A tour de bras. Ils étaient inflexibles. Étaient-ils justes?” Paulhan, *Autour de la lettre aux directeurs de la résistance*, 52-53; Paulhan, “Letter to the Directors of the Resistance,” 141.

<sup>39</sup> Cornick and Flood, “Reconciling France”: 37.

<sup>40</sup> Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xi.

participation in collaborationist organizations. Support for these positions “was considered one more instance of a writer’s adherence to Nazi ideology and treason of the French ‘soul’”<sup>41</sup> As Philip Watts argues, in the eyes of the prosecution, these activities and attitudes provided evidence that the writers had betrayed France, even though some of the defendants rightly argued that a number of these attitudes belonged as much to France as they did to Germany.<sup>42</sup> Brasillach, in particular, claimed that his fascism, anti-Semitism, and hatred of Communists and Gaullists were home-grown and motivated by love for his country. In other words, he did not so much want a German France, “[h]e wanted a fascist France, a national socialist France.”<sup>43</sup> In this sense, fascism and Vichy were indigenous to France.

As Robert Paxton argues, for French people of the early 1940s, Vichy represented an alternative within a pantheon of ideological and political choices, among them socialism, communism and liberalism. The 1930s had been a tumultuous and politically unstable decade. The turmoil created by the Popular Front, divisive politics, cultural polarization, and military failures created the conditions for civil war and provided the opportunity for Vichy to reorganize French society along certain ideological lines. Thus, the National Revolution was “the expression of home-grown urges for change, reform, and revenge, nurtured in the 1930s and made urgent and possible by defeat.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, to advocates of Vichy, the “Third Republic was not just unmourned: a systematic effort was launched to extricate every vestige of the despised “ancien régime.” “État français” replaced “République française” and “Travail, Famille, Patrie” replaced “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” on coins, stamps, official documents and public buildings;

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<sup>41</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Kaplan, *The Collaborator*, x.

<sup>44</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, 143.

busts of Pétain replaced those of Marianne...”<sup>45</sup> Under its National Revolution, aimed at regenerating the nation, the Vichy government liquidated democratic institutions, persecuted Jews, Communists, and Freemasons, and censored writers, all in the name of political purity and inaugurating a new era.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the common investment in the rhetoric of purity and revolution between and within political ideologies largely characterizes the run-up to the Second World War.

According to Watts, the ways in which the purge was conducted “was perhaps symptomatic of the postwar period: by condemning as traitors certain anti-Semites such as...Brasillach..., the courts were transforming anti-Semitism into a foreign, specifically German, ideology and avoiding the prickly and perhaps much more damaging issue of an authentically French participation in the Shoah.”<sup>47</sup> They served a symbolic and representative function as criminals and traitors, leaving the rest of the social fabric untouched, and avoiding admitting to troubling aspects of French identity. Tony Judt argues that the “ways in which the memory was distorted, sublimated, and appropriated, bequeathed to the postwar era an identity that was fundamentally false, dependent upon the erection of an unnatural and unsustainable frontier between past and present in public memory.”<sup>48</sup> An anti-fascism that defines itself by insisting on an otherwise pure national community is, in Paulhan’s view, if not dishonest, then deeply misguided. The mistake is to think that one can prevent others from differing in the meaning that they locate in the term ‘France.’

He builds upon his central idea that punishment and integrity should not be driven by a desire for purity. In *Of Chaff and Wheat* Paulhan discusses this by way of the characteristically

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<sup>45</sup> Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> See Marc Boninchi, *Vichy et l'ordre moral* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005) and Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1998) for analyses of how Vichy’s emphasis on purity affected discussion of family and ‘vice’ laws and women, gender, and sexuality.

<sup>47</sup> Watts, *Allegories of the Purge*, 27

<sup>48</sup> Judt, “The Past is Another Country,” 293.

unlikely route of the card game of bridge. He writes that bridge works as a game precisely because it is imperfect: “games are based mainly on elements of chance and invention, hypotheses; in a word, on wit. As soon as its language becomes perfect, bridge will become a precise calculus.”<sup>49</sup> A straightforward and unproblematic communication between players would make the game mechanical, less amusing, less surprising, and, as a result, not worth playing. The continuation and development of the game is based on the always present possibility for miscommunication. This point is made clearer in his deliberation on ‘international languages’ like Esperanto.<sup>50</sup> Paulhan argues that because of the intentional and constructed basis of these languages, where each word is made to correspond to only one idea, they are doomed from the outset. These ideal languages do not take into account the changes in meaning that naturally take place in the use of language. He predicts that these languages will evaporate, not because of inconsistencies or imperfections, but because they are meant to be perfect. He plainly states that “languages are ruined by an excess of precision” and that “a perfect language admits of greater disappointment than hope, penalties than rewards.”<sup>51</sup> Language needs confusion, errors, and ambiguity, which stimulates the mind and instigates change.

This notion is connected with the way that Paulhan understood the potential social impact of writing. Paulhan’s conception of the relationship between the text and the reader is much different than that which governed the assumptions of the purge. Implicit in the CNE’s idea of the responsibility of the writer is an idea about the irresponsibility of the reader. Charles de Gaulle expresses this vision: “one could see too well toward which crimes and which

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<sup>49</sup> “Mais prenez garde qu’un jeu repose d’abord sur une part d’incertitude et d’invention, d’hypothèses; bref de génie. Le jour où votre langage sera parfait, le bridge se trouvera remplacé par un calcul précis.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 42; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 42-43; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> “les langues se détruisent par un excès de précision.” “Où l’on voit qu’un langage parfait s’ouvre à la déception mieux qu’à l’espoir, et appelle les châtements, plutôt que les récompenses.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 43, 45; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 16.

punishments their eloquent instigations had pushed poor gullible people...in literature as in everything else, talent is a responsibility.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, a prosecutor in the case of Robert Brasillach succinctly summed up this view in his questions “How many young minds did you, by your articles, incite to fight the *maquis* [Resistance combatants]? For how many crimes do you bear the intellectual responsibility?”<sup>53</sup> Yet far from being a straightforward transference of the author’s intention, the predicament, which Paulhan also demonstrated in *Flowers of Tarbes*, is that readers and writers invariably misread one another. He understood “meaning...[a]s an invention – and sometimes one that has to be slowly and painfully executed - made on each side with their own resources by the speaker and the spoken to.”<sup>54</sup> The process of making meaning relies as much on the reader's response as on the writer’s intention, and, as he affirms in *Flowers of Tarbes*, literature has no way of ensuring how it is received.

Milne contends that “Paulhan...identifies a space of slippage between how words are used and how they are received, a slippage that both threatens the polity, since it robs all utterances of any secure reception, and opens up the possibility for re-negotiation around these utterances.”<sup>55</sup> In *Flowers of Tarbes* Paulhan explains that Terrorist methods are based on an illusion because they fail to allow for a difference between the writer and the reader’s experience with a text. Words can be understood as either mere words or as evocative ideas, and this depends on the process of reading as much as it does on the writer’s intention. This indeterminacy in literature is where, in *Of Chaff and Wheat*, Paulhan locates what he calls the writer’s right to error. To Paulhan, it is the function of literature to take chances for all. Literature is fundamentally based on risk because it is open to the response it will receive from readers. He writes: “if literature is

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<sup>52</sup> Lottman, *The People's Anger*, 240.

<sup>53</sup> Tony Judt, *Past imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 65.

<sup>54</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 92.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

precisely a festival, no one would want it to take place without risks. It's a festival where a bomb blows up in your face, and that can end up (like any real festival) with the slashing of a knife."<sup>56</sup>

Anna-Louise Milne writes:

language both commands our agreement and offers us the means of shifting the terms of social interaction. It is both what gives material form to the world ...and what makes possible the creation of new horizons and new ways of being. And this is why the experience of the writer is cardinal...the writer is the subject who experiences the limits of what can be said, yet runs the risk of changing the order of discourse and thus of changing the terms of life...This is what makes literature a primary experience of freedom, as well as an essential generator of freedom: it redraws the shape of the sentient world.<sup>57</sup>

Paulhan sees this as the fundamental role of the writer and the advantage of the reader. In this way, the writers who have constructed a tribunal for literature, putting in place a system of moral and legal precepts about the roles and responsibilities of literature, make literature impossible.

A section in *Of Chaff and Wheat* is devoted to the process by which foreign words become adapted into French. For Paulhan, "the question is whether French can still defend itself and disguise in its own way the exotic words it receives."<sup>58</sup> He writes that one must "dress up a foreign word before letting it into the ballroom" of French language.<sup>59</sup> This adoptive process is a sign of a healthy language and a fit literature. Figuratively relating literature to the health of the human body, Paulhan writes that

There is a way to fight which consists in dodging punches (or at least in knowing how to take them.) But there is another, wiser method, which consists in anticipating the pain: either by throwing the first punches or by isolating and getting rid of, one by one, the *causes* of leprosy or tuberculosis. Now Terror, in the war it wages against an affliction of language, behaves like a doctor who would have his patients suffering from contagious illnesses executed.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Et s'il est exact que la littérature soit une fête, personne ne voudrait qu'elle fût une fête sans danger. C'est une fête où il arrive qu'un pétard vous saute aux yeux, et qui peut s'achever (comme toutes les véritables fêtes) par des coups de couteau." Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 53; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 19.

<sup>57</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 112.

<sup>58</sup> "La question est de savoir si la langue française est encore capable de se défendre, et d'habiller à sa guise les mots exotiques qu'elle accueille." Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 14; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> "Or la première des règles veut qu'on déguise les mots étrangers avant de les admettre dans la salle." Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 14; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> "Il est une façon de se battre, qui consiste à esquiver les coups (ou tout au moins à les savoir encaisser). Mais il existe une autre méthode, plus sage, qui consiste à prévenir le mal: soit en portant les premiers coups, soit en isolant

Instead of unmasking certain commonplace expressions and revealing them to be nothing but rhetoric, and then summarily ridding them from literature, Paulhan proposes to treat occurrences of discord as a symptom of language itself. The essential feature of a symptom is that it allows the doctor to monitor the state of a disease.<sup>61</sup> If Rhetoric is illness, Terror should allow itself to be exposed to it as a form of inoculation against it.<sup>62</sup> In the postwar political and literary context, this process involves not necessarily an acceptance or tolerance of other political groups or ideological positions, but a recognition and consideration of them as properly French.

Like words, nations are not essences, but articulations. More clearly, nations are arguments. To Paulhan, the nation is the locus for contradictory impressions, which can be either rejected or accepted. The nation has to accommodate or argue through rival elements in order to give “France all its voices, its whole voice.”<sup>63</sup> Paulhan’s problem with the purge was its claim to draw its legitimacy from the ability to speak for all, when, as Milne states, “political consensus...must rather involve putting people in the presence of the impossibility of imposing one meaning.”<sup>64</sup> Thus Paulhan describes the true patriot, who is not simply a partisan purger disguised as a patriot, as able to contend with difference. Beyond the partisan positions advanced by the CNE, Paulhan appeals to a patriot who is both French and foreign, accepting and challenging the identity of his homeland. This is the necessary double nature of the hybrid identity of a nation. Paulhan’s thinking on the subject can be described as an attempt to strike a very delicate balance between a conception of nation as a stable entity and nation as an evolving

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et supprimant une à une les causes de la lèpre ou de la tuberculose. Or, Terreur, dans la lutte qu’elle mène contre une affection du langage, agit à la façon d’un médecin qui ferait exécuter ses malade contagieux.” Paulhan, *Les fleurs de Tarbes*, 138; Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes*, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 92.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Syrotinski, “The Rhetoric of Illness in Jean Paulhan,” *Yale French Studies* 106 *The Power of Rhetoric, the Rhetoric of Power: Jean Paulhan's Fiction, Criticism, and Editorial Activity*, (2004): 59, 62.

<sup>63</sup> “France toutes ses voix, toute sa voix.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 58; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 20.

<sup>64</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 93.

structure. Nations, like language, are both constant and changing. Thus, paradoxically, patriotism is “a love for the homeland; it’s also a firm will to make it better.”<sup>65</sup> In the preface to *La Patrie*, a collection of Resistance writings published in 1947, Paulhan writes that to be a patriot means to love one’s country as it is, but to want nothing more than to make it a different, better, country; to adore it, but not to support it.<sup>66</sup> This is the enigma of patriotism. And, to Paulhan, it is a task worth sharing between people and in good-will.<sup>67</sup> This is a reckoning, which does not necessarily entail reconciliation, but certainly cannot take place by purgation.

Similar to the arguments he waged against Terrorist writers’ claims to sincerity and authenticity, Paulhan finds the social, political and moral justification of the CNE’s purges to be based on what he sees as glaringly visible blind spots. The arguments presented in *Of Chaff and Wheat* and *Letter to the Directors of the Resistance* are formulated in terms of how he understands what is necessary to re-establish national community and literary integrity after the trauma of the war. These views are foregrounded in his theories of literature and how language works. The antagonism between Terror and Rhetoric that Paulhan identifies in *Flowers of Tarbes* shows that Terror’s will to purity in language is fated to bring about exactly what it opposes: a new linguistic regime. His position is motivated by an acceptance of the idea that the effects of language and writing will not stay still and that, consequently, the integrity of the nation cannot be built on the sort of exclusions advocated by the CNE and actualized by the purge trials. Instead, France and its writers must draw their strength from a capacity to cope with difference. In his conception of nation and patriotism, ethics has to be fluid or mutable, otherwise ethical considerations are reduced to a bureaucratic application of rules. Or, put otherwise, they have to

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<sup>65</sup> “C’est l’amour de la patrie; c’est aussi la ferme volonté de la rendre meilleure.” Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 115; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 44.

<sup>66</sup> Jean Paulhan, introduction to *La patrie se fait tous les jours, textes français 1939-1945*, ed. Dominique Aury (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1947), 22.

<sup>67</sup> Paulhan, *De la paille et du grain*, 173; Paulhan, *Of Chaff and Wheat*, 65.

be inventive and not simply dutiful. And this cannot take place in the shadow of tribunals.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### AN ETHICS OF RECKONING THROUGH LANGUAGE

On the face of it, the ‘two Paulhans’—the engaged *résistant* and the protector of collaborators—appear oppositional. When placed within the historical and cultural context of Liberation France and alongside his understanding of language and literature, however, Paulhan’s argument about the purges of writers is perfectly consistent. His commitment during the Resistance and his later support for the enemies of the Resistance is thoroughly coherent with his style of thinking about language, purity and social change. The violence of the purge, its intolerance, its posture of authenticity and insistence on purity corresponds to Paulhan’s discussion of Terrorist reactions to language in *Flowers of Tarbes*. Although discussing subjects like France, patriotism, collaboration, treason and democracy as issues of language and literature may seem to be speaking lightly about very solemn matters, there is an historical and ethical awareness and a process of social action at work in Paulhan’s analysis.

Paulhan’s arguments implicitly disputed the widespread memory of the Occupation. He tackled the problems of patriotism, treason and national purification in the complex and volatile atmosphere of postwar France, which was in the process of constructing what was, to Paulhan, a disingenuous and dangerous relationship to the recent past. Following liberation, the Resistance was allegorized and hypostasized into a symbol representing all of France. It was seen as the only authentically French response to Occupation. The collaborators were therefore presented as shadowy elements, outsiders and traitors to France. It follows from this interpretation that the solution to moving on to a truer, purer national community was to purge these polluting forces from France, allowing the nation to wholly connect to the true France of the Resistance. This analysis established a social framework through which the past of the Occupation was interpreted

and the future of France was determined. The purge thus operated to cleanse and close up this regrettable period of French history.

Paulhan claimed that, like Terrorist writers, the writers of the CNE who advanced the purge as a means of purification were making claims that could not be supported. The primacy that the Terrorist writer gives to pure and original expression, or to a sublime coalescence of word and thing, is akin to the postwar insistence on the possibility of a pure and united France. In the same way that the practice of Terror in literature attempted to salvage the integrity and freedom of literary expression through expunging suspect elements of language, the CNE sought to effectuate the liberation and salvation of France through a process of censure and removal.

For Paulhan, this sort of relation to the past instigates a perpetual and preventable motion of repression and reversibility because, as Syrotinski states, “the essence is always to some extent contaminated by the accidental”<sup>1</sup> Rather than seeing difference as a contamination that needs to be purged, Paulhan recognizes impurity as a state itself. Purity is an illusion, and any straining after it, either in terms of linguistic production or in national community, is bound to fail.

Attempts at reaching pure states lead to constant and violent vacillation. In terms of the purge, Paulhan argues that those who attempted to remove impure French literature in the name of purity and freedom instituted the suppression that they claimed to resist. In *Flowers of Tarbes*, Paulhan undermines this opposition between purity and artifice through his discussion of the interplay between Terror and Rhetoric, or transgression and convention. Terrorists, eager to overcome any sense of prohibition in the form of Rhetorical commonplace expressions, attempt to break with the past, only to end up instituting new rhetorical constraints, which the next avant-garde movement must then reject. This idea of literature is ultimately counter-productive and circular. The innovative intent and transgressive movement of the Terrorist becomes stuck and

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<sup>1</sup> Syrotinski, *Defying Gravity*, 116.

ends up creating new dogma restricting the practice of writing. To Paulhan, seeking purity entails creating impediments towards freedom. He contended that national solidarity rebuilt as a pure entity can only result in a new tyranny. This could not lead to a better society.

In the same way that he thwarted a desire to identify a vanguard of literary innovation and freedom, Paulhan frustrated the apparent need for a comforting, singular and authentic French identity following the Occupation. As Tony Judt has said, “Postwar France resorted to a strange self-induced amnesia, strange in that it took place in broad daylight, so to speak, and in the face of common knowledge of the truth.”<sup>2</sup> This identification of a scheme of forgetting echoes Paulhan’s reason for taking his stand against the purges. He questioned the way that cultural memory, especially within his own profession, operated to construct a particular idea of France after the traumatic events of its experience during the war. During the Second World War, there was no broadly shared interpretation of the situation arising from military defeat; some French people resisted and others accepted, even embraced, the Occupation. France was contested and conflicted. Equating collaboration with treason effectively repressed the existence of an authentically French extreme right ideology, and this resulted in a failure to examine why some French people welcomed the occupying regime or identified with its project. For Paulhan, it is a partisan, not a patriot, who would claim that the Resistance only and truly represents France. He claims that true patriotism transcends partisan differences and does not rely on social exclusion. Patriotism means sustaining, and contending with, opposing ideologies. The establishment of the appearance of national cohesion based on exclusion, to Paulhan, prevents an actual re-invention or transformation of the national community based on a reckoning with the past. Paulhan’s arguments against the purge were therefore also a call for closer examination of notions of national integrity.

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<sup>2</sup> Judt, *Past Imperfect*, 47.

The apparent rupture represented by the Occupation and Vichy France actually hides a strong ideological and institutional continuity. The collaborators had not betrayed an absolute, pure state or a True France; rather, they had betrayed a certain idea of France. Attempts to stabilize the meaning of France required a repressive power. Paulhan sees meaning as diffuse and on-going, requiring an analysis of practice and not a quest for the origin, and a swift eradication, of wrong-doing. To Paulhan, incorporating the Vichy years into French history requires the same sort of perspective he sees as necessary when dealing with the inevitable use of rhetorical language in the production of original literature. Re-negotiation in and about national identity is based on Paulhan's vision of language as both stable and flexible. The idea of the responsibility of literature that motivated the CNE's intellectual support of the purge of fellow writers relied on the assumption that the writer's intention is directly translated through the reader's interpretation. Paulhan was resistant to this stable, causal account of language's ability to command agreement, commitment, action, and hatred. To him, the effects of a text are always unpredictable; words are redefined in time and by readers. Literature is open to the responses it will receive from readers, their enthusiasm and their disgust. This openness of language is what allows for the possibility of transformation, and, in becoming questionable, words and ideas can be put to work in defining new meanings by which to live.<sup>3</sup> Paulhan's position is motivated by an idea that the effects of language and writing will not stay still. Like language, nations are also subject to the past and the future. As a result, literature and the nation cannot be constructed on a system that promotes particular aesthetic or ideological inclusions and exclusions. Literature can make change, but legislating literature prevents the possibility of this change. For Paulhan, power operates where there is no debate.

Language and nation are constantly an occasion for contestation and reformulation. Like

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<sup>3</sup> Milne, *The Extreme In-Between*, 113.

language, Paulhan claims, the nation becomes stronger and more functional, but no more true, when it has been the object of sustained attention. According to Paulhan, this is how national consensus and identity rightly forms, breaks and changes. Social exchange, where ideas are challenged, accepted, rejected, and amended, becomes possible. In both literary and national contexts, this always takes place in a circumstance of competing values. Rather than founding just measures of legislation for all, Paulhan believes that society can revise the norms that define it through the recognition of, and struggle with, difference. This is the distinction between critique and condemnation. His ideal vision relies on the free flow of ideas, and thus of writing, where both writers and readers participate in the direction of community. France must draw its strength from a capacity to contend with the past of the occupation years, in all its contradictions and complexity. In Paulhan's thought, language leads into the political, and the political is constituted by language.

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