Friedrich Sieburg, a twentieth-century German francophile

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FRIEDRICH SIEBURG,
A TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN FRANCOPHILE

by

Frederick M. Sommer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
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December, 1996
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ABSTRACT

Friedrich Sieburg achieved renown as a German literary critic in the years following World War II. His career in journalism and diplomacy prior to 1945, largely ignored in the 1950s and 1960s, has come under a new scrutiny since 1980. The connection between Sieburg's writings, many of which dealt with France, and his work with the German Foreign Office in wartime Paris has been a particular object of this scrutiny. The study FRIEDRICH SIEBURG: A TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN FRANCOPHILE builds on the work of Joachim Fest, Margot Taureck and others, and argues that Sieburg was a romantic nationalist who became a National Socialist. He constructed a theory, from elements in the German literary tradition, which posited French form in opposition to German mass. This theory makes intelligible his praise of the German 1933 as a national awakening and as the workings of a mythic destiny. Journalism and diplomacy served Sieburg's historic role as national publicist. After 1945, Sieburg was generally silent about the Hitler regime; his was a common response in a nation unwilling to assess its past. Attached to this study is a translation of the greater part of the memoir of Paris, OUR MOST BEAUTIFUL YEARS, which Sieburg published in 1950.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The German writer Friedrich Sieburg lived from 1893 to 1964, and in the years between 1933 and 1945 he supported National Socialism and did important work for the Nazi government. This compromised him profoundly and led to the "bitterness and misanthropy"¹ of his final years, in spite of his newfound repute as literary critic in those same years. On one level Sieburg's chronology of allegiances was common to many nationalist Germans of his generation: loyal service to the militarist empire in youth, opposition to the prosaic republic in early adulthood, spirited support of the Third Reich in the most productive years of middle adulthood, and finally, in the postwar years, a burdensome awareness of the wasted past coexisting with a reluctance to discuss that past. All this was Friedrich Sieburg, and he was typical in so far as there were thousands of other Germans whose lives illustrated a similar pattern toward Germany's successive regimes. But the extraordinary, atypical thing about this writer was the degree to which the literary success of his final fifteen years tended to dim the memory of his earlier

cultural and political role as articulator of Germany's relation to France. For Sieburg, France and Germany were radically opposing essences. The measured rational form of France, though its contribution to past civilization was great, would in destiny's grand design for the twentieth century be superseded by the mythic, primal energy that was Germany's essence. The German upheaval of 1933 appeared to Sieburg a charismatic wave of national self-realization, a mythic deliverance to a primal, German temporal order freed of Western, rational elements. After Hitler's millenial Reich ended, Sieburg sensed his own and Germany's 1933-1945 existence as trancelike, as epistemologically inaccessible to, and undefinable within the terms of, the prosaic and rational order that was again dominant. His 1950 memoir of pre-1945 France, which constitutes in abridged form the second half of this study, presents the era as a dream, as a time seen with soulful distress through the dark glass of the 1945 caesura, which had shattered the mythic order as surely as 1933 had shattered the rational order. Sieburg's historical vision, and his support for National Socialism, were poetic in nature. Briefly put, he saw Germany as myth, and 1933 to 1945 as Germany's realization of myth. France, in his view, was the eternally rational opposite, if not enemy, of that myth.

Born in the Rhineland, culturally and geographically the most western part of Germany, Sieburg admired French poetry
in his student days. He fought with the German army in northern France from 1914 to 1918, and beginning in 1925 worked generally in Paris as a journalist, and lastly as a diplomat with the German embassy during the occupation of the early 1940s. In all, Sieburg spent half of his adult years in France. His German nationalism and his attachment to France were complementary: France was charming and beautiful, but it should be subordinate to dynamic, manly Germany.

The literature on Friedrich Sieburg falls, with few exceptions, into two neat categories which are both chronological and qualitative. The short notes published in his lifetime or shortly after his death were either effusive laudations or heated denunciations, the latter invariably linking Sieburg to National Socialism. On the occasion of his death in 1964 Spiegel praised both his elegant prose style and his firm, tradition-based opposition to "that simple feeling of superiority whose base is nothing more than the guilt of the fathers." Sieburg had "lived two decades abroad," Spiegel noted, and had thus "experienced the national side of his own person (das Nationale... an sich selbst) in a stronger fashion than is pleasing to the taste..."

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2 "We stood at the window, a French student by the name of B. and I, two twenty-year-olds. We had read the poets of the Pléiade and had spent a long, lightly scented May afternoon with a sonnet by Joachim du Bellay." Friedrich Sieburg, Gott in Frankreich? (Frankfurt: Societäts Verlag, 1954), 357.

3 I am counting his years in the First World War.
of today." In affected, oblique dismissal of the moral question at the center of the writer/diplomat's life, the magazine quoted Sieburg quoting Montaigne: "Why should I not say of a thief that he had a pretty leg?" A famous negative view of Sieburg came from the Vienna-born novelist Robert Neumann, who in 1964 pronounced Sieburg "the Globke of literature," a reference to Hans Maria Globke, an important government functionary in both Nazi Germany and, until 1963, the Federal Republic. Globke's name had become a symbol for the prominence and power of ex-Nazis in 1950s and 1960s Germany. Indeed, as late as 1969 the Federal Republic's Chancellor, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, was a former member of the Nazi Party. Hence, to point out the parallel between Sieburg and Globke denigrated not only the writer but called into


5 gc, "Der Globke der Literatur," Die Welthühne 5 (January, 1964), 157. This short article, signed "gc," credits Neumann (as does Schonauer) with authorship of the damning epithet "der Globke der Literatur."

6 Louis L. Snyder, "Hans Globke," Encyclopedia of the Third Reich (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 116. Globke wrote the official government commentary to the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which deprived German Jews of citizenship, and his commentary guided judges and civil servants in decisions regarding the property, housing, employment and legal rights of German Jews in the late 1930s. Globke, a very thorough and by his own account neutral servant of the state, was later (1953-1963) chief of Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's office staff. Adenauer defended Globke's 1935 commentary as "an objective interpretation of the racial laws" and pointed out that Globke had never joined the Nazi party. Globke was tried in absentia by an East German court and sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the Nazi treatment of the Jews.
question Germany's claim to have decisively turned away from its Nazi past. Sieburg's name and reputation had by the time of his death been irrevocably tied to the troubling question of continuity in Germany. In a way, Sieburg in his last years was hiding behind the comforting screen of "Zero Hour" (Stunde Null), a late-1940s term for the ideological claim that Germany was totally destroyed in 1945 and thus a clean slate whose new text would be utterly different. Like the fabled Phoenix of Egyptian legend, Stunde Null promised youth from ashes, and though the ideology became discredited after the critical, tumultuous 1960s and 1970s, it persisted in obfuscating the historical contours of Friedrich Sieburg. Well into the 1980s Sieburg's pre-1945 years were, if not a thing unmentionable, then but a faint background whisper, a lingering doubt. Sieburg's work for the German diplomatic corps in the 40s, when it appears in favorable assessments of the author, is represented as his refuge of last resort, an "escape into the Foreign Office," a putting of distance.

7 "People spoke of the Stunde Null or 'Zero Hour,' when the edifice had to be rebuilt from the foundation up." Wayne C. Thompson, et. al, Historical Dictionary of Germany (Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 181.

8 Richard von Weizsäcker, German President in the late 1980s and early 1990s, wrote that "there was no Zero Hour, but we had the chance of a new beginning. We used it as best we could." Cited in Wayne C. Thompson, 514.

9 Günther Gillessen, Auf verlorenen Posten. Die 'Frankfurter Zeitung' im Dritten Reich (Berlin: Siedler, 1986), 413. A similar view of the Foreign Office as saving Sieburg from a worse fate is in Nikolaus Benckiser, Zeitungsschreiber, Politiker, Dichter und Denker schreiben.
between his own person and the brutal Nazi apparatus.

Between 1980 and 1987, almost a generation after the death of Sieburg, six substantial scholarly pieces appeared reviewing his entire career, and they devoted more attention to his Nazi ties than had been the practice in the 1950s and 1960s. The five articles, ranging from fourteen to thirty-five pages, and the impressive 297-page book by Margot Taureck, all reached two similar conclusions. The first conclusion was that the conventional view of Sieburg as post-1945 critic should expand to include his first career in France, which culminated in his diplomatic service. Sieburg's significance was, in this reappraisal, more intelligible if seen in the context of his entire life, not just the narrower West German context of his final years. In a word: continuity. But the second conclusion of the 1980s scholarship, in apparent contradiction, saw mystery, discontinuity, and a lack of causality or coherence in Sieburg's historical identity. All of the 1980s Sieburg scholarship shares these two themes, and the following review of the individual research items emphasizes differences of degree and nuance, not of essence.

Franz Schonauer,¹⁰ in the first of the 1980s

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reassessments of Sieburg, noted that the author's career had been "as brilliant as it was wretched," but that he was "today all but forgotten." He classified Sieburg as an anti-liberal, anti-democratic conservative who in the closing years of Weimar was part of "a literary Bohemia oscillating between left and right." Much later "his cultivation and immense erudition" made him the ideal arbiter of taste for the self-doubting conservative reading public of 1950s Germany, where he wrote "exclusively for a certain social and educational stratum, a stratum that really existed only in his imagination."\(^{11}\) Schonauer, who in 1961 had written a lengthy study of literature in the Third Reich,\(^{12}\) found the odd mix of aestheticism and fascism to be the great problem in typing Sieburg. Hence the article's title-thesis: "The Aesthete (Schönggeist) as Collaborator, or Who was Friedrich Sieburg?" The matter of Sieburg's historical identity was to be the piquant question at the center of all subsequent Sieburg scholarship.

That same year, 1980, Joachim Fest published an essay treating Sieburg's life as primarily a career in journalism. In a phrase taken up in later Sieburg research, Fest noted that there was a "conspiracy of silence" among those who knew Sieburg in the 1930s and 1940s in regard to Sieburg's involvement with the Nazis. "Some have forgotten the

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 108, 109, 113, 118.

\(^{12}\) Franz Schonauer, *Die deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich*, (Olten: Walter Verlag, 1961).
details, others obviously are pretending to forget, and still others simply decline to give any information." Fest furthermore decried the bland conventionalities such as "age of barbarism" and "years of darkness" which Sieburg had so effectively employed to dodge a critical look at his own role in the 1933-1945 German past.

Fritz J. Raddatz in his 1981 forward to a two-volume collection of Sieburg's literary essays presented Sieburg much as Schonauer had, as essentially an aesthete. But while not ignoring Sieburg's Nazi connection, Raddatz stressed the discontinuity in Sieburg's historical profile. Sieburg in this account "wrote nothing for ten years, from 1939 to 1948," a claim disputed by later researchers, especially Margot Taureck. But the assertion enabled Raddatz to regard Sieburg's successive careers as separate, discrete phases. Raddatz saw Sieburg's work as towering over the "rubbish" (Unrat) that often had passed for literary criticism in the early years of the Federal Republic. "One can understand the applause that the grandiose soloist Sieburg received." Finally, Raddatz compared Sieburg to Gottfried Benn, both aesthetes attracted to fascism. Benn, however, distanced

13 Fest, 260, 268.

14 Fritz J. Raddatz, "Schreiben ist Leben," forward to Friedrich Sieburg, Schriften zur Literatur (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1981), 11-45. Of the 752 pages of material by Sieburg in this two-volume anthology, 630 pages, or 83%, are from 1948 or later.

15 Ibid., 11, 15.
himself from the dictatorship from the mid 1930s, long before the war.

Manfred Flügge took a very different approach. Leaving the post-war Sieburg completely aside, he saw the author as a would-be intermediary between Germany and France. Not without sympathy for Sieburg, Flügge detected a perverse logic linking Sieburg's 1929 best-seller *Gott in Frankreich* to his diplomatic work in occupied Paris. Sieburg is for Flügge an "exemplary case" in the wider field of French-German relations in this century, especially 1933-1945. As will be seen, my own study is much indebted to Flügge's, but I find Flügge's conclusion that Sieburg failed in his grand project not entirely persuasive. The continued sales of Sieburg's books about France long after 1945, and Sieburg's ability to gather a significant French audience up to 1945, argue for his success, not his failure. But Flügge is correct in stressing the unbridgeable contradiction between Sieburg's odd Francophilia and Hitler's Francophobia.

Klaus Harpprecht, writing in 1983, found Sieburg to be a conservative nationalist who in the years prior to 1933 felt a "secret attraction" for authoritarian "conservative revolutionaries." Sieburg was something of a nihilist,


truly "the bourgeois at the abyss." As would befit an abyss, Harpprecht refers to "research on Sieburg, which has not yet begun" as a potentially "broad and swampy (morastiges) field." Such an assertion, that there had not yet been, as of 1983, any research on Sieburg, is an intriguing confirmation of Fest's "conspiracy of silence" thesis.

Certainly, since the appearance of Margot Taureck's book on Sieburg in 1987 it is no longer possible to claim that research has not begun. *Friedrich Sieburg in Frankreich* is the indispensable foundation to which all subsequent study of the author will be greatly indebted. Taureck focuses on Sieburg's French writings and actions from 1925 to the end of the war. The phrase "between the wars," part of her subtitle, is therefore somewhat misleading, but this is a small point. She puts forth the interesting thesis that the Sieburg revival in the 1980s reflected that decade's "historical pessimism (and) talk of the death of the subject ... combined with a turn to mythology and a new irrationalism." The mood of crisis, fed by intellectuals who "carry the apocalypse in their hand baggage," has deep affinities with the anti-rationalism of the 1920s and 1930s.\(^{18}\) Using

\(^{18}\) Margot Taureck, *Friedrich Sieburg in Frankreich. Seine literarisch-publizistischen Stellungnahmen zwischen den Weltkriegen im Vergleich mit Positionen Ernst Jüngers* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), 4. The phrase about baggage is from Hans Magnus Enzensberger. My own sense of the spate of scholarship on Sieburg in the 1980s is that it represented a late, post-polemical phase of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the effort to weigh critically the pre-1945 past, an effort that began to accelerate in the 1960s, though it long remained partisan and divisive. In that
the formula advanced by Fest, Taureck laments the "conspiracy of silence ... which (Sieburg's) admirers now as before try to keep intact." It is thus regrettable, but unavoidable, that many of the texts she analyzes - unsigned articles in the Frankfurter Zeitung and intelligence reports in the German Foreign Office archives - must be attributed "with the highest probability," but not with absolute certainty, to the writer/diplomat. Her book is not so much a finished edifice as a foundation, though a very massive and solid one. The present study is an addition to that foundation. Taureck does not discuss Sieburg's interesting, voluminous, and often unreliable post-1945 references to the culture of pre-1945 France. The present study, however, will incorporate those problematical writings into its analysis of the writer.

There was also one essay about Sieburg which, appearing in the author's lifetime, did not quite fit into the categorization of chronology and quality that I have mentioned above. Maximilian Scheer included within his memoir of 1930s Paris, published in East Germany in 1964, a decade one could probably not have found a writer of the center-right such as Fest being so open about the Nazi past of an FRG establishment figure. That no major work on Sieburg has appeared since 1987 confirms my view. Germany was, until 1989-1990, still being punished for the war, still morally on probation. Now that it enjoys greater autonomy and prestige, it has a lesser need to take a critical, self-accusing look at its past. In other words, the return of silence on Sieburg is part and parcel of Germany's rehabilitation. All of this is a matter of degree, of course, not something absolute.

19 Taureck, 7. The following quotes are from pages 224 and 41.
chapter on Sieburg entitled "An old Chameleon."\textsuperscript{20} It was an anomaly - the sole portrait of Sieburg ever done by a fellow writer who had known him well in the 1920s and 1930s. Scheer's Sieburg was the "pen hero of the SS state," the "counterfeiter of the word" whose postwar reminiscenses constituted a "monstrosity of corpse desecration." Scheer's harsh judgment would be easier to dismiss if it were not for the silence it sought to break.

As I have pointed out above, the present study differs from some Sieburg scholarship in viewing the author's career from the late 1920s to the early 1950s as a continuity. The continuity is manifest in his theory of French-German dichotomy, a theory which, briefly put, opposed French rational static form to German mythic dynamic mass. Sieburg's 1933 \textit{Es werde Deutschland} was a rhapsodic tract to the 1933 German revolution composed in the signature of this German-French dichotomy. Flügge and Taureck are correct in putting the German-French problem and the long residence in Paris at the historical center of Sieburg's life. In the decade after the war, Sieburg's writings on France alternated between a remorseful repudiation of Nazism and his old insistence that French civilization was static and built on formal illusion, and both of these strands inform his widely-read, disingenuous 1950 memoir of Paris, \textit{Unsere schönsten Jahre: Ein Leben mit Paris}, the greater part of which appears in first-ever

English translation at the end of this study. Only after the mid 1950s did Sieburg, now a pillar of West German literary criticism, shed his nationalist preoccupation with France and become the conservative aesthete he is remembered as.

Sieburg was a builder of national myth prior to 1945. His reticence after 1945 about his role in Hitler's Reich was his tribute to the power of that myth. How, after all, could post-1945 prose dare to speak of, understand, or judge the pre-1945 mythic spell which had vanished with Hitler?²¹ Sieburg's silence, like that of many Germans, was tantamount to a denial of the past. But given the poetic nature of Sieburg's thought, and the irrational charismatic appeal of National Socialism, there was a certain logic to his and Germany's relative lack of self-examination after 1945. Sieburg is important because his response to France, to the Nazis, and to national myth were, however idiosyncratic in some aspects, representative of powerful, formative elements in German history.

²¹ "As soon as (Hitler's) orgiastic dream of power had come to an end the nation awoke as though from a long period of stupor.... The wicked spell did not long outlast the magician. With unbelieving amazement the Allies found almost no National Socialists in a country governed for twelve years by National Socialists." Golo Mann, The History of Germany since 1789, transl. M. Jackson (Praeger: New York: 1968), 491. Mann is rightly not as unbelieving as the Allies of 1945. Charismatic faith might create food for believers (Jesus and the loaves and fishes of Mark 8:1); conversely, the collapse of the Hitler faith could delete National Socialism from German consciousness.
CHAPTER 2

FRIEDRICH SIEBURG'S LIFE AND CAREER IN BRIEF

Friedrich Sieburg was born on May 18, 1893, in the small town of Altena in Westfalia, Germany, east of Düsseldorf. He showed literary interests from an early age and when he was sixteen published several poems in a newspaper in Düsseldorf, where he attended a prep school. He began his university studies in Heidelberg in 1912, taking courses in history, literature and philosophy. The years 1912 to 1914 brought to Sieburg the decisive friendship of Norbert von Hellingrath (1888-1916), a scholar who had taught in Paris at the prestigious Ecole Normale before coming to Heidelberg. A Bavarian whose mother, Princess Cantacuzène, was descended from a Byzantine dynasty, von Hellingrath, as recalled by Edgar Salin, "displayed to friends his free unconstraint by a light exaggeration of consummate forms" and a "politely pardoning, superior, disarming smile." At this time Hellingrath, with some guidance from the cultic, elitist poet

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1 This term is not a bad rendering of Gymnasium, a secondary school for those who will attend university. Unlike American prep schools, however, German Gymnasien were and are often state or municipally supported.

2 Edgar Salin, Um Stefan George (Godesberg: Helmut Küpper, 1948), 141-2, the following quotes 144, 24.
Stefan George (1868-1933), was preparing an edition of the poet Hölderlin. Salin, memoirist of the George Kreis (circle), has described how Sieburg's own understanding of poetry aided his approach to the Kreis and to Hellingrath. "With his easy Rhenish manner he (Sieburg) was able to gather around him youth of similar bent (gleichgerichtete Jünglinge) from the most varied German districts." Sieburg met frequently with his new friends to read poetry in the summer of 1913, and in the autumn George noted that a few in his Kreis were imitating Sieburg's speech patterns. A dramatic scene occurred in which George told his assembled disciples, one of whom had just recited, that he did not approve of what he took for Sieburg's influence: "'And do you know what was most uncomfortable for me - whose voice seemed to be echoing through to me?' None of us knew it. But then the name came out with cutting sharpness. It was the name of the young Rhinelander who had sought in the past summer to get close to the poet and his companions." Sieburg had a few weeks earlier been expelled from the Kreis ("We showed him to the door") after he boasted that George had given him a book with the handwritten dedication "To the coming one (dem Kommenden) - Stefan George," a signature probably forged by Sieburg. Salin condemned Sieburg (without giving Sieburg's name!) as "in human, spiritual and poetic terms a confidence man (Hochstapler)," but he also noted with regret that, to the independent Hellingrath, the young Rhinelander was for a time very important. Sieburg's favorite teacher and thesis
advisor was Friedrich Gundolf, also in the George Kreis, indeed first among George's disciples.

Hellingrath enjoys some fame as (re)discoverer of Hölderlin. Sieburg for his part came to regard Hölderlin's synthesis of Greek and patriotic elements as the "innermost essence" of Germany's pre-1914 generation. For Sieburg the war, and Hellingrath's death at Verdun in 1916, strengthened the mystic bond linking literature with the national collective.

We went to war with Hölderlin's illuminating maxim: "Where there is danger, there is also salvation," and the deadly bullet hit the most noble of us, Norbert von Hellingrath, at the moment his face, sunk in the manuscript of the hymns, seemed to turn upward.®

A reserve officer,^ Sieburg went to war at its very


^ Harpprecht, 29, refers to Sieburg as a "son of little people" whose "origin in modest circumstances" (Herkunft aus dürftigen Verhältnissen) produced a social inferiority complex explaining much of his character. He may have a point, but there is very little in print on Sieburg's early years. Taureck (16, citing Frédéric Lefèvre, "Une heure avec Fr. Sieburg" in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, Nov. 29, 1930) reports that at Christmas, 1916, Sieburg's father just barely managed to obtain potatoes to put on a meal for his son, home on leave from the front in France. If Harpprecht had information about the modest circumstances of Sieburg's background, he should have given it in a footnote, especially in view of his odd claim that research on Sieburg had not begun prior to his 1983 essay. Sieburg's officer rank and presence at prestigious Heidelberg University, and his ability to impress the George Kreis with his knowledge of poetry, argue against a modest origin. I would say that, if there was little property (Besitz) in his early youth (which is arguable, given the paucity of documentation), there was
beginning in the late summer of 1914, serving initially as an army infantry lieutenant, a *Frontsoldat*, then in 1916 advancing to flight officer within "a small and fine elite troop." While on his flight missions over France he was twice slightly wounded, the second time just before the armistice in the fall of 1918. Resuming his studies in Heidelberg, he achieved his doctoral degree in 1919 with a thesis on Greek lyric poetry which he dedicated, somewhat effusively, to Hellingrath. Sieburg credited Hellingrath with the discovery of two contrasting poetic dictions, one a "hard" mode akin to magic or outcry, a mode valuing the absolute word as primal event, the other a "soft" mode, flowing, civilized, relational and syntactic. This distinction became not only the basis of Sieburg's thesis, but also, a decade later and in modified form, a key constituent of Sieburg's system of French-German duality. Sieburg later wrote that the years at Heidelberg university were "paradise," and that those who knew that time and place as he did could not but find the world that came later to be "colorless and dry, as though made of ashes."  

Sieburg moved to Berlin in 1919, and in 1920 published a certainly cultivation (*Bildung*).

5 Schonauer, "Der Schönegeist," 110.

6 "In memory of Norbert von Hellingrath, fallen Nov. 16, 1916, dedicated in the loyal train of his spirit as a slight monument." Ibid., 109.

7 Ibid., 110.
collection of poems with the characteristic expressionist title _The Redemption of the Street_ in which one poem, "Call to Berlin," appealed to the workers of that city to avenge the betrayal of their cause that the authoritarian Social Democrat Noske and his paramilitary "cohorts" had perpetrated just a year before. Sieburg dedicated the volume to Rosa Luxemburg, the Communist leader of the 1918-1919 revolution who had been murdered by the paramilitaries. But the youthful poet's momentary embrace of proletarian revolution was highly ambivalent, probably a reflection of what Ernst Troeltsch called the "dream world of the armistice period." The dynamic collectivist ecstasy Sieburg evoked owed much to the male bonding extolled by influential groupings on the German right, among them the George Kreis. In light of Sieburg's later equation of the German essence with formless energy, it is interesting that a contemporary critic dismissed Sieburg's poems as "formless-oceanic."  

Lo, I am raging with comradeship for thee,  
I am the friend who goes forward, who follows, who stands close by.

In the same poem, Sieburg contrasts the old world of

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8 Taureck, 29.


literature with the dynamism of the new century, which is collectivist - "us" - and mythic, fabulous.

Calling out "Down with poets" I proclaim us.
I cast thee, O brother, into the fabulous century 11

The poet's sympathies for mass action were at cross purposes with the elitist mentality he had acquired as a military officer. This became evident when rightist Prussian military and paramilitary units in association with the conservative politician Wolfgang Kapp staged an unsuccessful Putsch in March, 1920. 12 "On the morning of the Kapp Putsch we asked him to put on his lieutenant flier uniform and go to the war ministry. He came back in the evening, depressed and acting funny, the task unaccomplished - supposedly it had been very dangerous. Some of us guessed then that he had never even gone at all." 13 Thus, in spite of the expressionist poetry, a conservative respect for the Prussian putschists, and fear, rendered Sieburg inactive on this crucial day.

The onetime poet and revolutionary sympathizer joined the staff of the prestigious Frankfurter Zeitung in 1924, a

11 Raddatz, 18. The German title of Sieburg's collection was Die Erlösung der Strasse.

12 The paramilitary Freikorps that suppressed the German revolution and murdered Luxemburg in the winter of 1918-1919 were the same forces that in 1920 supported the Kapp Putsch.

13 Scheer, 161. Scheer is quoting Rudolf Leonhard, a friend of Sieburg's in the 1920s.
liberal newspaper which as part of the Weimar establishment offered Sieburg a security and prestige far removed from his early 1920s days. He was initially a correspondent in Copenhagen. In 1925 he was transferred to Paris, a city which would be his base of operations for all but two of the next nineteen years.

Sieburg's most famous book, *Gott in Frankreich?*, an attempt to interpret French culture and the relation of France to Germany, appeared in 1929, just as the great heyday of cooperation associated with the names Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann (Stresemann died that year) was drawing to a close; by the early thirties it was translated into French, English and Italian. Sieburg seemed at this time to advocate friendship and cooperation between France and Germany. Though no longer the revolutionary sympathizer of 1920, he had by 1929 not yet identified himself with the political right. Within four years, however, he would write *Es werde Deutschland* (Let Germany Become) a hymn of praise to the dynamic nationalism that was sweeping aside Germany's first republic. In view, however, of the book's dedication to Heinrich Simon, the Jewish publisher of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the book was an endorsement of German national

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14 Friedrich Sieburg, *Gott in Frankreich?* (Frankfurt: Societäts Verlag, 1954)

15 Friedrich Sieburg, *Es werde Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Societäts Verlag, 1933). The Biblical words of creation, rendered in English as "Let there be light," were translated by Luther as "Es werde Licht," words unmistakably echoed in Sieburg's title.
revolution rather than Hitlerian National Socialism. Indeed, the dedication to Simon made mention of his and Sieburg's supposed interest in "the construction of a new left." But Sieburg was less a figure of the left than a mystic romantic nationalist and, in 1933, a believer in German energetic mass, which he then as later contrasted to the static formal rationalism of France. His basic political attitude, he told Simon in 1931, was "bündisch" - a male collectivist ethos already evident in some of the poems of 1920. It would, however, be mistaken to search primarily for an intellectual or ideological development in Sieburg's late Weimar writings. His use of the written word in these years is more intelligible in temperamental and psychological terms. He was still the man who, as in his courtship of the circle around George and in his expressionist poetry, sought to ride the vibrant charismatic wave at its high-tide. His brush with George may have been elitist, his 1920 poetry collectivist, his 1932-1933 fervor popular and nationalist, but the pattern was the same - the wish to be counted in the bonded, chosen elite which would overcome the stale nineteenth-century world. In the course of 1933 Sieburg the ex-expressionist drew closer to the energizing, revolutionary Nazis. Thus the critic and publisher Peter Suhrkamp, writing in the prestigious *Neue Rundschau* in June, 1933, could see in

16 Ibid., 6.

17 Gillessen, 75, 545.
Es werde Deutschland a "theologizing of nationalism," and in a special forward to the 1933 English edition Sieburg lauded both Hermann Goering (like Sieburg an aviator) and Adolf Hitler:

Why? Because this movement incorporates an inner truth which consorts with our character. Germany was ... languishing beneath a sort of evil spell, but none of her leaders could find the magic formula with which to unbind the spell. Adolf Hitler found it.... As Göring once said, the saving idea hung like a star in the firmament ... but only one man saw it, namely, the insignificant soldier from Braunau, who had just emerged from the hell of the World War. 19

After 1933 the French-German understanding Sieburg espoused could not be but more tilted to the new German order, which Sieburg hoped would become a European order. Though his post-1933 writings contain passages which can be read as veiled criticisms of aspects of National Socialism, his Paris datelines generally and consistently supported the policies of the German government.

In August of 1939, while in Berlin, Sieburg left the employment of the Frankfurter Zeitung, control of which had been taken from the Simon family in 1933 and 1934, 20 and entered the German diplomatic corps. Sieburg returned to

18 Peter Suhrkamp, "Es werde Deutschland," Die Neue Rundschau 44 (June, 1933), 850-856.

19 Raddatz, 43.

20 Gillessen, 76f.
Paris after the defeat of France in the spring of 1940. He was back in Germany at the editorial offices of the Frankfurter Zeitung for several months in 1943, but continued his work with the Foreign Office, in Paris and elsewhere, till the end of the war. His final diplomatic task was to be of service at the castle of Sigmaringen to French officials who had fled or were taken eastward into Germany before the Allied advances of late 1944 and early 1945.

Because of Sieburg's Nazi past, he was not allowed to publish for three years, but in 1948 the French-sponsored Schreibverbot lapsed and he resumed his journalistic career, writing for the most part literary criticism for the new Die Gegenwart (The Present). Sieburg was, in Fest's judgment, "as if created for the representative role" and Harpprecht saw this representative aspect most evident in Sieburg's post-1950 period:

It was not exceptional that after the dictatorship he moved as rapidly as possible to create anew his bourgeois life. Not unusual either that he looked back as little as possible to past terrors and nameless crimes. He shared this feature with the majority of German citizens. He did not expose himself publicly to the shock that the million-fold murders should have caused. He did not ask how it had come to all that, nor if he was responsible or even what he might have done wrong.22

21 Fest, 259. Fest writes that Sieburg, though created for it, missed playing out his role as "Representant." But I disagree. Sieburg, like Globke, was a "Representant."

22 Harpprecht, 29, 30.
Sieburg flourished within the 1950s West German "economic miracle," and the poet Gottfried Benn congratulated him on having created such a "sublime, cultivated, Lucullan and opulent" personality.\(^{23}\) Realizing now his "calling as Olympian,"\(^{24}\) Sieburg advanced in 1956 to literary editorship of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), then as now the country's most prestigious daily newspaper, and from this high office he "ruled mightily and unscrupulously the literary skirmishes of the fifties."\(^{25}\) He became what the Germans call a literary pope - *Literaturpapst* - and in his southwest German home "whose interior stepped just beyond the threshold of the nineteenth century" he dined punctually on golden platters and wrote his essays by hand "using light blue deckle-edge paper and dark blue ink."\(^{26}\) Responding to an interviewer from *Spiegel*, the liberal weekly newsmagazine, he wrote that he "would be most willing to appear for you in a carefully arranged ascetic scene with a cot and bucket," but that "I unfortunately no longer have the courage to

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\(^{24}\) Scheer, 156. Harpprecht, 33, sees a parallel between Sieburg in the 1950s and Goethe, both of whom towered as Olympians above a society of mean creatures who "set great store on envy of the gods."

\(^{25}\) Gerd Ueding, "Moralist in der Maske des Rezensenten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* December 8, 1981. Cited in Taureck, 7. Ueding praised Sieburg's essays as "pearls ... which up to now have not found their way into the pigfeed of German studies." (ins germanistische Saufutter.)

\(^{26}\) Schonauer, "Der Schöngeist," 107.
expose my Utrillos and Louis XVI chairs to the public gaze.... Believe me, in regard to this matter we live, even in the tame Federal Republic, under terror."27

Sieburg held his office till his death on July 19, 1964.

27 Raddatz, 38. The letter, addressed to the photographer Wachsmuth, was printed in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, 12/13 May, 1973.
The first chapter of this study traced broadly the problem of Sieburg's relation to France and to National Socialism. The second chapter offered a rapid survey of his life and some insight into his unusual character. It is now necessary to proceed in slower motion and focus more narrowly on Sieburg's move from obscurity to renown in the closing years of the Weimar Republic. He built at this time a reputation as an authority on the relation between Germany and France. Rather ambitiously, but quite in keeping with the nationalist mode of those years, Sieburg sought to define the characters of both Germany and France. In the space of four years he authored two books, two programmatic essays, and several book reviews which schematically juxtaposed French rational stasis with German mythic dynamism. With each new work Sieburg put greater stress on the antagonism between the two countries, and as the republic gave way to dictatorship in 1932-1933 he proclaimed that his country should reject French-influenced rationalist fetters and 'become' the primal, mythic Germany of a secret and revolutionary destiny.
Sieburg constructed his typology of French and German essences from disparate elements within German tradition. In a general and long-term sense, the German view of France was deeply influenced by the German nobility's preference for the French language in the eighteenth century. Frederick the Great of Prussia (reigned 1740-1786) was a Francophile who wrote verses in French, housed Voltaire for a time in his court, and regarded German as the language fit for addressing horses. The German middle classes, in opposing the courtly and noble use of the French language, came in the course of the nineteenth century to associate courtly values with France and thus to reject them. Thus the German Bürgertum, in Curtius' formulation, "was unable to step into the legacy of a noble culture, as in England, or a courtly culture, as in France." In *The Civilizing Process. The History of Manners*, Norbert Elias traces how Germany's "sharper, more rigorous division between courtly and middle-class circles" shaped the German contrast of French civilisation, seen as polished, formal, corrupt and superficial, with German Kultur, seen as inward, true and innocent. The middle-class German "awareness that courtliness and French are related entitites" began as a social tension in the eighteenth century, to emerge in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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1 Ernst Robert Curtius, *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1932), 16.

as a national tension. Sieburg's own work, though not contrasting the words Kultur and civilisation, owes much to this long-standing interface of cultures. ³

Up to 1929 a merely successful journalist of little renown or contour, Sieburg became famous as a result of that year's Gott in Frankreich? The book became a great success and was translated within two years into French and English. Its French title - Dieu, est il Français? - entered the refrain of a popular Paris theatrical revue. ⁴

The thesis of the book is that France is conservative and individualistic, Germany dynamic and collectivist. France offers a certain sweetness of life which, regrettably, may be disappearing, but it is also the fearful, pompous defender of the European status quo whose basis is the treaty of Versailles. France as static being, Germany as dynamic becoming - "Sein" versus "Werden" - this is the theme around which Sieburg wove his variations, and the dichotomy was to become sharpened in Sieburg's writings as 1933 approached.

Sieburg's one-time friend, the left-liberal Rudolf Leonhard, wrote in the Paris Le Monde in April, 1933, that Sieburg told him the book was "francophile." This is, however, an overstatement, a 1933 view of aspects of the book

³ This view of French culture is not confined to Germany. In the English speaking countries the vocabulary of military, diplomatic and culinary matters is surely a result of France's status in the courtly, kingly, noble cultures of pre-1800 Europe. Nor is anti-French sentiment without a class aspect, particularly in England.

⁴ Fest, 259.
which were but partially developed in 1929. Sieburg's French publisher Bernard Grasset was probably correct when he told Sieburg that the book was a profession of love for France, but it was a profession by one whose demands were to grow monstrously as his power over the beloved grew.

Nickolaus Benckiser has made a good case for "historical reportage" as the genre of Sieburg's entire oeuvre. Gott in Frankreich is historical reportage made up of forty-nine impressionistic essays; it is by no means an academic treatise in the manner of Ernst Robert Curtius' Die französische Kultur, which appeared the following year, 1930.

The book begins with a list of thirty-odd reasons for the author's choosing to write on France, all of them involving the resistance of France's charming, idyllic life to a self-transforming Europe led by Germany. He admired France:

5 Sieburg, Gott in Frankreich?, 31. But Sieburg somewhat testily rejected this: "He wanted to see the book as a declaration of love for France and in that way set up the greatest pleasure known to a Frenchman, namely to reject a declaration of love that was never even made to him."


7 Ernst Robert Curtius, The Civilization of France, trans. O. Wyon (Freeport: Books of Libraries Press, 1932.) This translation carries a foreword by Curtius dated "Bonn, Easter 1930" in which he recommends Sieburg's Gott in Frankreich? as a "brilliant essay."
because I am weak enough to prefer a stay in an old-fashioned, disorderly paradise to one in a shiny white, unconsoling model world

because I would like to immortalize the tear with which I take leave of a stubborn and outmoded France before I enroll, without enthusiasm ... into the European community.

In *Gott in Frankreich?* Germany and France have much to learn from one another. Their essences were mutually complementary. France, however, is clearly an inhibiting brake on German dynamism. Sieburg both accepts and contests France's claim to supremacy in Europe. He employs the term "Rome idea" for the country's appropriation of the ancient empire's status as arbiter in culture and politics. Joan of Arc and Louis XIV built on this foundation of hegemony; the former appropriated God for France, and the latter as Sun-King extended French military and diplomatic, but more important its cultural and aesthetic power to much of the continent. The Great War had been a resurgence of this Roman-imperial, anti-German idea, with France pressuring small countries such as Denmark to submit to its hegemony: "The world war was conducted as a crusade.... The disavowal of Germanic culture became the special concern of the upper class, who hoped in this way to restore some firmness to their spiritual uncertainty." As in the days of the Sun King, France-Rome claimed a normative power befitting her static, formal, rule-governed essence.

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*Sieburg, Gott in Frankreich?, 59, 62.*

*Ibid., 289.*
The treatment of French literature, like the "Rome idea" thesis, showed a characteristic mix of awe and irritation. On the one hand, the author envied the social and political prestige that writers in France enjoyed, and lamented that in Germany writers were utterly marginalized and without any "participation in public life." But the close connection of literature to society and politics was at the same time a defect. Developing his Hölderlin-influenced theory treated in some detail at the conclusion of this chapter, Sieburg posited French vocabulary as essentially prosaic, relational, humanistic, and social, whereas Germany's was primal, immediate, ecstatic and cosmic. "Their word is of social origin and functions as relation, not as essence; it derives from conversation, not from magic formula." France was the land of the novel, Germany of the hymn.

Germany's non-resistance to nature, destiny, and historic-cosmic discontinuity left it a free field for collectivism and technology. "Germany ... sees entire stretches of the human trail unlighted and ... has never separated itself from the unordered mother ground of nature. It takes today its destiny in hand and ... awaits its freedom, its good fortune from the perfecting of the apparatus, from the concentration of its labor, from collectivity." France, to the contrary, isolated itself in the new century by retaining a linear, rationalist view of

10 Ibid., 216, 219.
man in opposition to nature. "From the sparks of Prometheus to the steam turbine France sees the straight path of civilized man opposing raw nature, and it stands today in the flowing and restlessly organizing world as an island-like structure."¹¹

These ideas were not original. If the book's focus on French conversation and linearity owed much to the old anti-courtly polemic, it was also, in a shorter time-frame, a popularization of ideological polemics of the First World War. Sieburg's own Frankfurter Zeitung had published in October 1914 an essay by Friedrich Gundolf, his Heidelberg teacher. The central thesis of Gundolf's piece was that Germany's lack of finish was a mark of youth and energy, and this gave it the right to command and shape a new Europe.

Germany alone is not yet finished, and how often has this unfinished-ness harmed and intimidated us before the form, security and roundness of the Latin (romanischen) peoples and the British. Around every German figure surged a chaos of urgings still wrestling. From this the duty, the right to Europe's rebirth rises up to our people, who alone have at their core a molding energy and an unconsumed, formless abundance, who alone, in a word, still have youth.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 312-3.

¹² Claude David, Stefan George. Sein dichterisches Werk, transl. A. Remmen and K. Thiemen (Munich: Hanser, 1967), 375, 499. David notes that the image of a used-up France promoting dead values became a "commonplace" (Binsenwahrheit) in Germany, and he attributes to Sieburg a key role in creating this image. But in fairness to Sieburg it should be noted that Flügge sees the book as an analysis of the "Mal Français," the backwardness of France that preoccupied French technocrats at the time, who saw French economic thinking as peasant, zero-sum, and Malthusian.
In the autumn of 1929, the last of Germany's five prosperous years preceding the Great Depression, Sieburg published "The situation of the intelligentsia in France" in Die Tat, a journal with a decided (but not exclusive) bias toward authoritarian anti-republicanism. The article was a minor contribution to an ongoing discussion, with Ernst Robert Curtius a major participant, about the social and economic place of the intellectual in modern industrial society. The new mass and consumer society of the Weimar Republic no longer accorded the writer or university professor the prestige and economic security he had known under the Empire. Curtius, building on the early nineteenth-century French thinker Henri Saint-Simon, envisaged the intellectuals as a social elite above narrow partisan or political factions, whose higher, lighthouse-like view of social totality enabled them to point the way in conscious avant-garde fashion. Sieburg came to a very different conclusion. France, in his view, was still a traditional, not yet an industrial civilisation, and thus the position of the intellectual there had not become as problematic as in

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13 Sieburg, "Zur Lage der französischen Intelligenz," Die Tat, October, 1929, 529 - 532. As the article is only three pages, I have not identified the page numbers of the quotes.

Germany. "One can scarcely speak in France of a crisis of the intelligentsia such as predominates in Germany, where the worker of the mind is pressed as a mass into questionable proximity with the proletarian." Sieburg's static France knew no crises, and he took issue with the thesis of Charles Maurras' 1905 *L'avenir de l'Intelligence*, (the Future of the Intellectuals) which depicted French literature as the promoter of upheaval. "He speaks of the Great Revolution and romanticism, but fails to say that these events were not uprisings ... but rather currents, which ... fortified the continuity of the French idea of civilisation. The intellectual (geistig) creator in this land has always affirmed its civilisation and believed in its society." Tradition, in short, was unbroken in France.

In Sieburg's France "class oppositions are minimal." The country's pre-industrial culture had not yet produced a proletariat. "A revolution in France would not consist of a liberation of the proletariat, but rather in its creation." Such an organizational and industrial revolution, if it came, would be led not by the static liberal state but by the dynamic technological innovators of the private sector. "The only really thoughtful tendencies toward upheaval are coming from the economic management circles, who want to abolish liberal civilization and the tendency toward preservation in favor of élan producteur and industrialization." If that were to come, the security of the intellectual creator in France would approach the crisis already evident in
industrial Germany; the formation of classes typical of industrialization would impel French intellectuals to view themselves not as a mentality centered around literature, but rather as a social stratum of university graduates with clear interests. They would have to shed their traditional individualism and form self-protective corporatist syndicates. Indeed, there had been some movement toward this in the early 1920s, "when France seemed to be regrouping economically.... People believed the autarchy of France was at an end and thought seriously about the resulting dangers for the workers of the mind. A movement arose whose center was the journal Le Producteur (1920), which wanted to inaugurate a new, economically based collective method in place of the traditional individualism and to incorporate the intellectuals into this method." The resulting Confederation des Travailleurs intellectuels had seemed briefly to be "the first step toward intellectual (geistig) class formation and sociologization of the intellectuals (Intelligenz)" But this trend lost in importance as the

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15 This corporatism of producers, in the words of the French syndicalist Hubert Lagardelle, would be based on competence, not partisan ideology, and therefore be far in spirit from the liberal parliamentary "régime of intermediaries, of eloquence and of bureaucracy.... Of little importance are the divergent political or philosophical conceptions of men who produce. A real solidarity unites them ... the solidarity of producers." Hubert Lagardelle, "L'Assemblée Régionale Professionelle, L'Information Régionale, March 13, 1926. Cited in Jeremy Jennings, Syndicalism in France: A Study of Ideas (New York: St. Martin's, 1990, 201-2.
French economy recovered after 1920 and "slid back into its traditional equilibrium." That restored equilibrium, a balance between agriculture and small enterprises, was a static "Rentenkapitalismus," a culture of savings and dividends, quite unlike Germany. "Its economic formula is the possession of money, not labor as in Germany." This stable, restored France shielded its middle-class professionals, including the intellectuals: "The impoverishment of writers, physicians and teachers can only take place where the bourgeois order no longer corresponds to the economic order, that is in a poor, industrialized country," but Sieburg's ordered, geometric France clearly could not be such a country. France's intellectuals had since the brief crisis of 1920 "found again their old self-confidence." They had reasserted the primacy of literature as the defining element in the intellectual elite. Statesmen

16 In spring of 1920 French retail prices reached 412% of their 1914 level, but by the autumn a "cyclical world crisis" lessened the price of imported raw materials. "The trade balance recovered spectacularly and exports managed to cover 87% of imports," and French retail prices stabilized at 310% of the 1914 level for the second half of 1921 and all of 1922. "The crisis, like others before it, recovered most of the inflation unleashed in the preceding period." Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief, The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938, transl. A. Forster, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 93-94. Also Jennings, 202, reports the syndicalist Lagardelle's (footnote above) interest in Le Redressement Français, which advocated "the overhaul of the state and a greater say for the producers in the running of the economy. At its height between 1926-1928 Le Redressement Français attracted considerable support and attention, but Poincaré's successful stabilization of the French franc (and thus the apparent avoidance of economic catastrophe) meant that by 1929 it was effectively finished."
saw it as their "most sacred duty" to write at least one literary book and military men sought entry into the Académie. And what irritated Sieburg most, a point he had made in Gott in Frankreich?, was that the wide esteem and influence accruing to French intellectuals contrasted so abjectly with Germany's intellectuals, especially the writers, who had no say in "the shaping of public life nor on the production of public structures." Sieburg, in this important 1931 essay on the French intellectuals, clearly envied their prestige and their access to political power. State, society and literature were close to one another in France. It was an intact tradition that did not yet know the dislocations of Germany.

By contrast, German intellectuals had virtually no political role or influence. In several book reviews Sieburg now urged Germany's elite of Geist to draw toward the restless nationalist masses, the Volk. As the Republic slid into gridlock after 1930 he sounded a new (for him) note in declaring the war experience of 1914 - 1918 to be "the wound of our existence.... We men of the generation of the war front undertake an ineluctable settling of accounts with the values of liberalism." There was something "in our German essence" - a phrase Sieburg used with greater frequency after 1930 - that inherently resisted ideas such as pacifism, non-violence and international understanding. Sieburg warned against an arrogance of an intellectual stratum aloof from the great popular national will: "If we do not help Germany
spiritually, it will help itself spiritually."\textsuperscript{17}

Sieburg may not have realized that, in expressing greater sympathy for nationalism at a time when the Nazis were already the most vehement and determined nationalist element, he was himself drawing closer to the Nazis.

\textsuperscript{17} Sieburg, \textit{Schriften zur Literatur}, 132, 134.
CHAPTER 4

SIEBURG AND THE ADVENT OF THE
NAZI DICTATORSHIP

Sieburg in 1931 and much of 1932 was a figure of ambiguous political contours. His Frankfurter Zeitung colleague Benno Reifenberg, who would be very helpful in reviving Sieburg's career after 1945, sent the following appraisal to Heinrich Simon in late 1931:

I've thought one more time about what our friend Sieburg really looks like. Very difficult to get behind the mask he wears.... It is as if behind that laughing, gesticulating, never grave and above all never resting face his true essence, with little self knowledge, seeking some shape, were trying to break through. The man reveals himself only through writing.... One cannot ask him, 'What do you really want?' 1

Reifenberg had cause for concern, since by late 1931 the position of the Frankfurter Zeitung, a liberal, republican newspaper with a Jewish editor, had become problematic. The Weimar Republic was no longer the functioning parliamentary system it had been in 1929, the year of Gott in Frankreich? and "On the Situation of the French Intellectuals." The

1 Gillessen, 73-4. Gillessen is citing a report written by Reifenberg, dating from November or December of 1931, included among the papers of Heinrich Simon.
economic crisis had led to an erosion of support for republican parties, and the gainers since the 1930 elections had been the Nazis and the Communists. The resulting gridlock in the Reichstag, and the fall of tax revenues owing to the depression, were the setting for Chancellor Heinrich Brüning's decision to govern by presidential decree. These developments made dictatorship under constitutional sanction (something oddly permitted by Article 48 of the 1919 constitution) possible, and in fact it was President Hindenburg who decided to make Hitler Reichskanzler in late January.

Meanwhile Josef Goebbels, chief of Nazi propaganda, shrewdely calculated that once the Nazis became a mass party the nationalist intelligentsia would flock to their banner.² Sieburg for his part was writing after 1930 in a more nationalist vein than in the late 1920s. In greeting the events of 1933 as a national revolution, as Germany's coming to consciousness of its own essence, he acted out Goebbels' prediction that nationalists would entrust the country to the Nazis.

Sieburg's essay "Germany and France" in the fall, 1931 Neue Rundschau, an establishment journal whose readership came from a broader spectrum than that of the Rightist Die Tat, sharpened his thesis of an essential divide between France, the old form, and Germany, the energetic mass. To be

sure, France, in accord with its bourgeois essence, had a certain limited understanding of whatever was still bourgeois in Germany, and France had been "well along the way" to coming to terms with the unimaginative "stuffy bourgeois (spiessbürgleriche) reaction" that seemed briefly in the mid-1920s, the stable years of Weimar, to have achieved political control. But Germany was changing rapidly, and had become post-bourgeois: "The last few years have shown that the bourgeois stratum in Germany is incapable of exercising a decisive influence on the shaping of public life." The German element that appreciated France and wished for an understanding were those who like himself had grown up before

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3 Sieburg does not define "bürgerlich," which in his sense is usually rendered in English as "bourgeois," but can also be taken as "civil." In his usage it represents staid conservatism and a devotion to nineteenth-century values such as individualism, refined taste, literary cultivation, and private property. Imagination and adventure are not bourgeois, though they might be allowed in bourgeois literature. Like Goethe, Sieburg started as a romantic, then became a reactionary classicist. The bourgeois values are, in his French-German dichotomy, more French than German. After 1948 Sieburg defended bourgeois values and became a caricature of the fastidious authoritarian "high bourgeois." When he writes in the 1931 essay that only the bourgeois element in Germany seeks accommodation with France, the term is neither polemical nor pejorative, but it is condescending, as though 'bourgeois' were a thing the post-1929 economic crisis had made outmoded. When he writes in 1930 that France's economy is essentially rentier capitalism while Germany's is labor, his nationalism takes on an 'anti-bourgeois' and 'Left' position not dissimilar to Nazi culture. Josef Goebbels, Nazi propaganda minister, publicly ate Eintopf (lentil soup with sausage) to show the Nazis' pure distance from bourgeois plutocratic taint.

4 Friedrich Sieburg, "Deutschland und Frankreich," Die Neue Rundschau 42, (September, 1931), 304, 305.
the war and felt the pull of cosmopolitanism:

Our way led from the minsters of Ulm and Freiburg by way of the minster of Strasbourg to the cathedrals of Chartres and Notre-Dame de Paris. We understood why Goethe at many moments of his existence directed his gaze westward, and Stefan George's hymn to the Franks appeared as a sacred presupposition.

The youth of Germany, however, had turned decisively against the Francophile cosmopolitanism of those born in the late nineteenth century. "Youth no longer listens to us, it does not love France and, what is more, it does not know France nor wish to know it." This was regrettable but understandable given the Versailles-imposed reparations. Turned inward, German youth now "pours forth its formless enthusiasm stormily onto the tidelands of the German soul." This last phrase, properly considered, offers a rare insight into Sieburg's tortured state of mind as he hesitated on the edge of a fateful decision. Sieburg's age, education and temperament placed him among the internationalist, Francophile element which German youth now found outmoded and irrelevant. Nor was Sieburg alone in noting the very different cultural presuppositions of those hardly more than a dozen years his junior. A vast gulf separated "the people of the nineteenth century," Utmann von Elterlein observed, from those of "the beginning of the twentieth century." The immediate post-war generation, those reaching adulthood just

after the war, were, Hans Mommsen has written, the group most imbued with war veteran mythology accentuated by romanticism and nationalism. Sieburg, already a romantic nationalist, and now flirting, too, with the anti-Western myth of war service, could not yet shed his elite internationalism and plunge with youth into those "tidelands of the German soul." But those tidelands beckoned, and their appeal held not only the charismatic group bonding he had known in the George Kreis but also the release from nineteenth-century individuality, the "Redemption of the Street," which ecstatic expressionism promised in 1919-1920. The stormy tidelands of the German soul were saving waters - perhaps even a fountain of youth. But their miracle had a price: the rejection of the old, formal, French-tainted elitist individuality.

He was not yet ready to pay that price. Germany was in his estimation inextricably tied to France, more than to any other foreign nation, by culture, history and geography. "England turns its back on us ... Its relation to Europe, and thus also to us, consists of the wish that order may prevail to its rear." There was in Germany a certain sympathy for Russia as a fellow loser in the Great War, but Russia "has all of our shortcomings, and its virtues cannot be transplanted." France remained perforce Germany's partner; France "has been imposed on us by destiny." The two countries would have to settle their great conflict by

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6 Sieburg, "Deutschland und Frankreich," 307, 310, 311.
themselves; it was sheer evasion to speak of a European solution, and those who did so "would like to put a bridge over an abyss." The nature of this abyss was that France and Germany looked to different moral codes: "We simply do not have moral categories in common with that country." Tact, for example, was for the French a moral concept, but not for the Germans. "A tactless, tasteless, even an extreme (masslos) man can still be a good man to us. That is impossible in France." France's values were centered on limitation, order, life. Clemenceau, Sieburg claimed, had been correct in noting the German fascination with death: "The 'Tiger' has in fact touched on the core of our existence with his remark. The German has a unique relationship to death." Death was, after all, infinite and thus romantic, the "beautiful youth tarrying at the font of intoxication ... promising us new blisses, greater than life, in short, that death which is akin to love." The prosaic French were incapable of grasping this. So great was the divide that the Franco-German border was "the only geographic area in the world where cosmic movement is politically visible.... Growth, barbarity, youth, unrest, collectivity surge against its (France's) edifice." Two ways of life stood sharply apart:

A German Sunday: the streets filled with marching clubs, hardly a person alone or in twos, everything in groups and columns fit together like iron, everything following a flag, a drum, everything collectivity, the compulsion to join, to march in formation. French Sunday: with its sweet slovenliness, the idyll of its planlessness, its happy melee of humanity, a Sunday whose highest unity is the family....

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Sieburg, who began his literary career as a poet, returned now to verse-making for his great theme, the French-German dichotomy:

To you rest and the goal, to us eternal setting forth and wandering,
To you happiness, to us destiny,
To you perfection, to us greatness,
To you peace, to us uproar,
To you wealth, to us sacrifice,
To you the gardens and vineyards of this world, to us the eternal space,
To you the fruit, to us the growth,
To you sleep, to us dream, to you humanity, to us God!^7

The 14-page "Deutschland und Frankreich" raised Sieburg's historical-analytical conceptualizing of Gott in Frankreich? to metaphysical, to mystical dimensions. If the essay as a whole reveals a certain link between Sieburg and Ernst Jünger, the "reactionary modernist," this closing poem highlights an important difference. Sieburg is a romantic nationalist, not a modernist. The poem is chant-like and liturgical, an overcoming of 19th century bourgeois individuality not through technology and steel, as with Jünger, but through the aestheticized Catholicism of Stefan George. True, Sieburg's "German Sunday" likened ordinary Germans walking on streets to iron, but the word for iron - "Eisen" - had been employed in nationalist poetry by writers

^7 Ibid., 313.
(Arndt, for example) born in the eighteenth century. "Steel" on the other hand, a favorite with Jünger, was a modern alloy whose industrial character rendered it decidedly unaesthetic to the poetic imagination of the nineteenth century. As Jeffrey Herf has demonstrated in Reactionary Modernism, much of Jünger's historical importance as avant-garde writer lies in his aestheticization of the machine; Herf points out that the utopian impersonal collective of In Stahlgewittern and Der Arbeiter is a kind of super-machine. Not so Sieburg's collective, which owes more to poetry than to technology.

With Es werde Deutschland Sieburg made the decisive step toward the national fermentation he regarded as Germany's revolutionary "coming to consciousness." His works since 1929 had juxtaposed French static form with German energetic mass; with this 1933 work that German mass is celebrated as it now bursts the un-German confinement of rational republican form imposed by Versailles. Sieburg acknowledged to the Frankfurter Zeitung publisher Heinrich Simon that his hymn to German values was "put bluntly, too far to the right" for the "intellectual frame" of the Societäts-Verlag, a publishing house linked to that newspaper; nevertheless, the Societäts-Verlag did publish it.

Es werde Deutschland is a rhapsodic tract, an edifying

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nationalist sermon. National values have annexed all values, Sieburg declares, leaving the nation as sole content of consciousness, as supreme "idea":

The drive for renewal in Germany is so strong, encompassing and unconditional that it experiences moments in which it tolerates no other truth but its own, precisely because it feels only its own and understands any other truth merely as an aspect of that fiction, humanity.... In the German situation there is not even a wish for discussion. This idea should not be valid for all, on the contrary, it should be in its outermost apex only intelligible to the German.10

This development would be radically different from the "bourgeois nationalism of the nineteenth century ... as France fulfills this concept," but Sieburg gave credit to the authoritarian rightist French writer Maurice Barrès (1862 - 1923) for establishing the superiority of national over merely liberal and republican values: "Just as Barrès sought to create an extra-liberal nationalism by countering the absolute justice of the republic with a 'French' justice, so in today's Germany it is a matter of empowering German ideas."11

Sieburg took issue with the chiding commentary on German chauvinism that Ernst Robert Curtius had delivered a year before (1932) in Deutscher Geist in Gefahr. "What Ernst Robert Curtius in his not ignoble scorn calls the German

10 Friedrich Sieburg, Es werde Deutschland, (Frankfurt: Societäts Verlag, 1933), 249
11 Ibid., 248-9.
hatred of culture is in reality the nation's drive for self-preservation." Sieburg urged German intellectuals to pull away from the cerebral elitism defended by Curtius and embrace the national values of the German mass. In doing so they would lose fickle, dizzying time, but gain the real Germany.

Whoever wishes to release Germany from the fleeing of time must resist the functions of mere intellect.... Such persons and circles in Germany commonly reckoned the elite have lost the vital link with the wider, the real Germany.  

Most Germans, Sieburg (prematurely) asserted, lived "in big cities, where the laws of modern life protrude more strongly" than in the more traditional countryside, and it was in the cities above all that economic cycles had taken on a seemingly demonic power of their own: "The naked inhabitant

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12 Armin Mohler has called attention to the desire of the "Konservative Revolution" for an "overturning" (Umschlag) of the speeding, ephemeral time of modernity in favor of a more real, non-linear time. A believer of this thought mode "holds the 'linear' world to be a deception (Augentrug) whereas his world is always there, though the fixing of the gaze in one particular direction prevents one from noting it." Mohler finds mention of this "stepping out of the run of time" in the works of Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger, and quotes the latter: "The more we dedicate ourselves to movement, the more inwardly we are convinced that a resting being lies hidden under it." Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 98. In my judgment the tenous links between Sieburg and the "Konservative Revolution" run through George and Hellingrath. One can relate this "overturning" of linear time to Sieburg's and Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin, which I treat at the end of this chapter.

13 Sieburg, Es werde Deutschland, 276-7.
of the primeval forest was no less startled by the pounding of a nocturnal storm than the worker or clerk (Angestellte) at the sounding of the term business trend (Konjunktur)."

Understandably, the urban masses had come to believe that "non-human, almost mechanical forces" determined their fate. The republic had nothing to offer such people. "Where was the living stream 'politics' for which the humiliated and isolated souls thirsted? They longed for a true politics more than for daily nutrition." 14 True politics was, however, now visible. It was emerging from "the depths inaccessible to the lording (thronend) elites," and its social incubators were the many teamlike collectives characteristic of the new mass culture of urban life.

Into the factories, the work camps, the housing projects, the Free Corps, the leagues, the sport communities, the hiking groups streamed much of the substance of secret Germany, which had gradually been lost to the parties, the bureaucracies, the society, the economic circles and the religious communities, many of these institutions having become dead facades.15

The urban emphasis in Sieburg's social analysis, and the large importance he assigns to voluntarist, leisure-time activities suggest in some passages a modernist affinity, and his 1933 text has a new Jüngerian interest in the collective of worker and machine, which is shaping the German worker into a strong and more truly national type, superior to the insecure and de-nationalized elite:

14 Ibid., 263-4.

15 Ibid., 1933, 269.
What is called the upper class today is ... an intertwined mixture of adventurers, snobs, the neo-poor, businessmen and curiosity seekers.... They cannot even agree on what constitutes good manners if they do not have a tennis trainer or even a foreign con-man to tell them.... (But) the German worker ... lives in the machine landscape as in his own stylistic world. We have noted his face slowly taking on that firmness and solidity.... As every national face, his too seems to a degree imprinted with the quiet faith in the immortality and indestructability of his people. 16

As in Gott in Frankreich, Sieburg argues in Es werde Deutschland that Germany's embrace of the machine is one with its oceanic, no-boundary affirmation of destiny, as opposed to the resistant shell shielding and isolating France.

Sieburg's thought is mythic, and perhaps metaphysical:

Destiny is the machine, as Germany is of destiny.

The great transformation of the world, the destiny of the machine (Maschinenschicksal), smashes everywhere against fixed structures, against the solid and smooth walls of well-balanced cultural unities. No wonder these forms quake in deepest convulsion, and cracks run up the walls! Germany alone ... surrenders almost without will to the machine, it does not offer the resistance of a hardened legacy. 17

In other passages, however, Sieburg evokes not the machine and worker, but an imagery of religion and Nietzschean-Zarathustrian monumentality.

Tragic air surrounds this Germany. We would like to honor it as our mother and kiss its poor hands, so covered with every bitterness ... We would like to let our heated childlike tears stream over this thorn-crowned head glistening in blood and sweat. But how

16 Ibid., 1933, 182-3.
17 Ibid, 1933, 47.
is this to be allowed us, who are only now, with raging blows of the chisel, pounding Germany from out the hard stone!

As if in anticipation of this, Ernst Robert Curtius had written in 1932 that "We Germans fall back far too easily on tragedy and destiny."\(^{18}\) Sieburg's behavior in 1933 was an embrace of destiny quite consistent with his understanding of open, formless, energetic Germany.

Curtius had warned that the "new national myth ... of pure movement" as propagated by Die Tat was not the realization but the denial of German history. For Curtius, a cosmopolitan, Germany's roots reached outward to embrace Latin, Mediterranean and Christian elements. These diverse elements had nourished the culture of Gothic cathedrals, of Martin Luther, of beer and wine, of Goethe and Beethoven. A purging of non-German elements would therefore be Germany's self-destruction. Curtius granted that France as it was in 1932 had lost much of its creative energy and seemed a mere "ensemble of formal qualities," but Germany had need of the Latin element. "Whoever cuts off the way to Paris must open the way to Rome." In place of chiliastic destiny as a guide to national ethics Curtius suggested "constancy.... It combines identity with change of form, the static with the dynamic." A Francophile and an elitist conservative opponent of Nazi xenophobic populism, Curtius had little besides traditional culture to offer the weak, endangered Weimar

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\(^{18}\) Ernst Robert Curtius, *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1932), 45, 40, 47, 93.
Republic. He was impressed with the Center Party, a republican Catholic party whose symbol, the tower, indicated a bastion-like defense of Christian values. 15% to 18% of German voters supported the Center Party. The other great republican party, the Social Democrats, drew approximately a quarter of Germany's voters. But these two moderate parties were by themselves not strong enough to form a government after 1930, and moreover they were Germany's oldest parties, founded in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and dominated by older, non-charismatic figures. Their style suggested pre-1914 days, quite the reverse of the violent, youth-oriented Nazis and Communists. Patricians like Curtius or his friend the novelist Thomas Mann represented a conservatism that, though internationalist and anti-Nazi, was demographically small, culturally too connected to the nineteenth century and uneasy in the democratic age of the masses, and perhaps too lacking in political courage, to counter the national revolution of 1933.

Sieburg is not quite *sui generis*, but he is in some ways anomalous. Walter Laqueur has written that "hostility to France and everything it stood for was a basic element in the creed of the right." 19 Either Laqueur has made his generalization too sweeping, or Sieburg is not a figure of the right, and there is a certain plausibility to this latter thesis. The introduction to *Es werde Deutschland* had, after

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19 Laqueur, 102.
all, vaguely referred to a "new left" as Germany's hope. Sieburg may have supported the clandestine efforts of Kurt von Schleicher, who was briefly chancellor in the months prior to Hitler's succession, to reach out to segments of Social Democracy. Schleicher, whom Die Tat called "the social general," envisioned a populist authoritarian dictatorship. A French journalist recalled in 1964 that Sieburg had spoken in the early 1930s of Schleicher's plans for a French-German military alliance. It is very difficult, however, to imagine the rhapsodic Es werde Deutschland as the inaugural accompaniment to a regime led by the Prussian traditionalist Schleicher. At no point did Sieburg ever stress the Prussian heritage. No, Es werde Deutschland, though the fact sits uncomfortably with Sieburg's memory, supported the national revolution whose most vehement component was National Socialist, and this explains why Sieburg later called the book his "child of misfortune (Unglückskind)."


21 Harpprecht, 19.

Sieburg's political stance in 1933 was much like that of

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Gottfried Benn, a fellow ex-expressionist, but Benn's later behavior belied the proverb. Both writers viewed 1933 as the achievement of national self-definition, as a collective will to strength, as an overcoming of the stale, weak, individualistic nineteenth century. Benn's essay, "The New State and the intellectuals," which was broadcast over German radio on April 24, 1933, called on German intellectuals to cease wasting their time answering the carping liberals and get on to constructing the heroic new edifice of power. "Do not tarry in arguments and words! Be lacking in reconciliation! Shut the doors! Build the state." But Benn recanted; he did not support the Nazi state in its last, most defining years.

The conclusion of this chapter examines the decisive role played by poetry in Sieburg's construction of the French-German dichotomy. It will be recalled that Sieburg's 1919 doctoral dissertation dealt with "smooth and hard jointure" (glatte und harte Fügung) in ancient Greek poetry. The former was an aesthetic of flowing lines, of continuity, of pleasing formal prettiness. The latter was harsh, intense, fragmented, discontinuous, abhorring "the non-resistant sequential flow of logical connection."  

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23 Edler, Frank H. W. The Significance of Hölderlin for Heidegger's Political Involvement with Nazism (Univ. of Toronto, 1993), Dissertation abstract no. DANN78715, 15.
Sieburg's later dichotomy of French form and German mass would parallel this literary dichotomy. In a 1930 essay "Hölderlin in French," Sieburg credited his deceased friend Norbert von Hellingrath for discerning "hard jointure" in the poetry of Klopstock and Hölderlin. This kind of jointure was the strong, almost violent compression of lyric meaning into the smallest verbal unit, if possible into the single word. It is the poetry of a world in which there was first the word, and then the sense. It separates the word radically from the language used in society and leads it back to its magical, priestlike function. Hardness and non-reason (Ausservernunft) rule as highest values in such a style.24

This archaising style came as naturally to the German language as it had to the ancient Greeks. Indeed, German poetic rhythm was "infinitely related to the Greek" rhythm. To characterize the style Sieburg took the rare step, even for the 1930s, of employing the word "deutsch" in the superlative. Hölderlin's "most German language material (deutschesten Sprachgut)" furnished glimpses into the "uninhabited eternal space in which our highest fulfillments are to see - isolated, cruel, like gods." The German language's hymnic capacity, fully realized in the hard style of Hölderlin, had but one rival, ancient Greek. In 1937, seven years later, Sieburg published a tribute to Hellingrath which lauded Hölderlin's poetry as "an abysmal element, perhaps the deepest element of the German essence."25

24 Sieburg, Schriften zur Literatur, 97, 98, 101-102.
25 Ibid., 177-8.
French lacked this capacity for depth. As early as 1927 Sieburg, in a favorable review of André Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, had lamented the "language constraint" of French, its "glibness of syntax." French was conventional, confining form, unlike German's open expansion to the absolute; the 1930 Hölderlin essay made the contrast explicit. French imposed "reconciliation and connection." French literature had as its base "not the word" - a magic entity prior to meaning - "but the sentence, or even the paragraph."

According to the persuasive account of Canadian scholar Frank Edler, a similar reading of Hölderlin conditioned the philosopher Martin Heidegger, four years Sieburg's senior, to a pro-Nazi stance in the years 1930-1934. Heidegger greeted Hölderlin's anti-syntactic focus on the absolute word as a "linguistic turn" or *paronomasia*, a pre-logical overcoming of temporality's imprisonment, a release accessible only via the German language. Heidegger was familiar with Hellingrath's edition of Hölderlin, whose preface praised "hard jointure" as speaking without syntactic mediation "to the innermost fire of Germanness" that lay hidden beneath a wasteland of dross.26 The single, absolute words of Hölderlin as liberating *Augenblicke* (moments) enabled the philosopher to experience the Nazi ascent of 1932 - 1934 as a heroic long-

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26 Edler, 232.

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suffering vigil, as a Kierkegaardian leap of faith, as a "primordially powerful negative" before the fullness of authentic primal time. If Edler is correct about Heidegger, then it would be no exaggeration to say that both the philosopher and Sieburg were, in 1933 at least, theologians of a gnostic sect, with Hölderlin’s poetry as their sacred text.
CHAPTER 5
SIEBURG’S PARISIAN JOURNALISM, 1933-1939

Sieburg in 1932 and 1933 was, as we have seen, a proponent of the national awakening that resulted in dictatorship. In the years leading up to 1939 he would remain Paris correspondent of the Frankfurter Zeitung. If he was not a Nazi, which in the sense of party membership he would not become till 1941, then he was an apologist for Nazi Germany. This became very evident with the publication in the Frankfurter Zeitung of his essay "On the duties of the German living abroad"1 on April 7, 1933, the same day that, within Germany, a purge began of socialists, left-democrats and Jews in the civil services, including the universities. Without praising Adolf Hitler, Sieburg emphasized Germany's radically unique and secret destiny, unknowable to the non-Germans. The uninitiated were not in a position to judge German necessity as it was currently being carried out.

We live and fight according to a law whose inner validity we do not doubt for a minute, and before which we do not hesitate to respond. But the world does not yet know this law ... The German lives in

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an autonomous order; that makes his life great, but terribly difficult.

It was all-important for Germany to be a unity of sentiment at this dramatic hour, and Sieburg defied the world, and particularly the French, to find any crack or break in that unity. "We do not tolerate that one splits us into parties, that one drives wedges into the fissures of our national essence and attempts to set one German against another." To be sure, there was a need, domestically within Germany to continue discussion and thus "promote truth," but to the outer world Germany would present a solid front. "Germany is a whole, and what you with your punches (Ihr...Euren) are trying to strike, is just again and again the German people."

This belligerent use of the second person familiar pronoun seems to confirm Harpprecht's insight that France transformed Sieburg into a nationalist. But his liking for Paris did not lessen in the years following Hitler's accession; indeed, these were the "most beautiful years" of his 1950 memoir. Sieburg relished his role as correspondent of an ever more powerful Germany. His presence in the 'City of Light' was both magisterial and raffish. "For us young German Romanisten," Gerhard Heller recalled, "the visit to Sieburg was a kind of obligatory pilgrimage to the foremost authority on France."2 A French journalist remembered Sieburg as a "much in vogue" ex-pilot given to speed and

risks, who would often "zoom down (descendre en trombe) the Champs-Elysées in his immense white sports car."\textsuperscript{3}

Within the ideologically divided publicity apparatus of 1930s Paris the correspondent of the Frankfurter Zeitung, Friedrich Sieburg, held a strategic position as member of the board of the "Syndicat de la Presse Etrangère." The "Syndicat" had, according to a report of the German embassy in Paris, a decisive influence on the distribution of assigned seating for journalists in parliamentary chamber balcony. Opposed to the "Syndicat" were the leftist "Association professionelle de la Presse Etrangère" and the "Federation Internationale des Journalistes," both of which were sympathetic to the journalists who left Germany after January 1933.\textsuperscript{4}

Writing in 1973, the journalist Karl August Horst recalled Sieburg's 1930s Paris datelines as a cultured alternative to Nazi vulgarity. "Only one who daily had to breathe in the puffed-up, thickened jargon of other newspaper headlines can appreciate (his) sober, clear, cautiously controlled language."\textsuperscript{5} There is truth in this in so far as German writing from 1933 to 1945 was not an undifferentiated monolith. It retained a class-based, but ideologically


\textsuperscript{4} Taureck, 180.

monitored, hierarchy of taste dating from pre-1933. Thus, to cite but two examples, Julius Streicher's Der Stürmer, published in Nuremberg, was crude, plebeian, and anti-Semitic, whereas Das Reich, published in Berlin and enjoying the special patronage of propaganda minister Josef Goebbels, addressed a better-schooled public whose attachment to National Socialism was nuanced and sophisticated. Sieburg's work for the Frankfurter Zeitung attended this high, cosmetic niche within National Socialism. Margret Boveri, who worked for both the Frankfurter Zeitung and Das Reich, justly entitled her memoir "We all lie."6 Sieburg too, in toning his journalism toward "high culture," made himself part of the regime's all-pervasive mendacity.

Sieburg in these years became permanently estranged from former colleagues of the expressionist early 1920s who did not support the Nazis and had fled Germany, some to Paris. These included the writers Walter Hasenclever, Kurt Tucholsky (photographed with Sieburg in Paris in 1928) and Rudolf Leonhard. The German Communist writer Maximilian Scheer, who saw Sieburg frequently in 1930s Paris, wrote later that "He sold himself in Paris. From 1933 and 1939 he sold the esteem he had earned as a Weimar republican ... He seduced in writing and talk."7

Sieburg himself claimed to see his own function quite


7 Maximilian Scheer, So war es in Paris (Berlin: Verlag der Nation) 1964, 161.
differently. His memoir presents him in the mid 1930s as a humanist standing above the ideological fray. Thus, a political argument between two young women at a garden party in 1936 compels him to lament the dominion of politics over grace, charm and individuality.

An awful word, belonging to the base future, hung in the air: bloc formation. No longer did people face people - no, bloc faced bloc, and humanity and everything that had made up humane life - its fantasies and tenderness, its egocentricity and liberty and patience, was divided now into two crushing masses.®

He also put a bit of this concern over "humanity's loss ... of its private sphere"⁹ - his 1954 phrasing - into the book he wrote in 1936 on Robespierre, the French Revolutionary. The omnipotence and omnipresence of politics leads, in Robespierre's regime, to conformity and terror.

He did all that a man could do to show the fervor of his Republican heart; but he could never be sure that he had not done enough and would not be denounced by someone even more active.... Every hour, every moment, every word, every breath was impregnated with politics, for Robespierre's doctrine demanded incessant Revolutionary behavior, even when a man was alone.¹⁰

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⁸ Friedrich Sieburg, Unsere schönsten Jahre: Ein Leben mit Paris (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich, 1950), 272. Compare this with the remark of a Parisian journalist to Alexander Werth in late 1936: "In the past I used to lunch and dine with all sorts of people. Now I can be on friendly terms only with people who have more less the same political convictions as I have." Alexander Werth, Twilight of France (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), 122.

⁹ Sieburg, Gott in Frankreich?, 28. The quote is from the new introduction he wrote to the 1954 edition.

Perhaps Sieburg did express concern, in the mid 1930s, that politics might be making excessive demands on the individual. However, the "between the lines" criticism of Hitler which Michael Freund finds in Sieburg's *Robespierre*\(^{11}\) is, if present at all, a very indirect and oblique criticism.

Criticism of Nazi policy would in addition have been quite exceptional for Sieburg, who continued his journalistic support of German policy. Writing from Paris in the late 1930s, Sieburg contrasted France's autumnal malaise and self-indulgent individualism with Germany's community of destiny and service. With Hitler's dictatorship now firmly established, Sieburg modified his former duality of French form and German mass toward a new-found reverence for the concept "state." The October 30, 1938 essay "France's Future,"\(^{12}\) written just after France and Britain granted part of Czechoslovakia to Germany, presented France as decadent, but potentially redeemable if it would follow Germany's authoritarian lead.

Within the essay, a peculiarly French malaise, vintage 1938, emanates as some heavy debilitating vapor from the urban landscape of Paris. In "the narrow press of houses ... painted by Delacroix over a century ago," formerly so energetic, youthful and "cloaked in gunpowder," there was "today only a haze, the silvery haze of a sunlit October day

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which quietly surrenders its beautiful and Oh so tired life."

Complementing the anemic Paris day was the nervous demimondaine scene "at Maxim's last night" where French "Minister R." discussed the crisis with "the American ambassador and his ravishing feminine entourage" (reizenden Begleiterinnen). At nearby tables are the Duchess of Windsor, the Maharaja of Kapurthala, and Marlene Dietrich in a "gown of turquoise satin with flaming paillette embroidery." The threat of war, for the moment averted, had in truth been a beneficial alarm for this overripe egocentric France. "Munich was ... the defeat of the French world-view in a fight which pitted an utter readiness to sacrifice against an individualism inimical to the state (staatsfeindlichen)." France had not been moved by German weapons, but by those German ideas "to which tomorrow the world will belong." As in 1933, Sieburg in 1938 does homage to destiny, whose redemptive hand he sees stretched toward France. "Destiny's hand is a forming, building hand. We see it at work.... Statesmen step suddenly, directly, from party politics into the sphere of destiny, and in their conscience the word directed to France is already taking shape: "You will be different - or you will not be!"

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13 The ambiguous phrase is "Ideen, denen morgen die Welt gehören will," which can also be translated as "ideas that the world wants to belong to tomorrow" or even "ideas which, it is claimed, the world will belong to tomorrow." The last reading suggests a certain ironic distance on Sieburg's part.
"Work in Europe has changed its essence," Sieburg wrote, and in redirecting its priorities toward the new Europe France would have to "say goodbye to many good things." The future would be the era of the mighty state and a sacrificial, post-individualist work ethic:

It no longer suffices to spend time fidgeting around with patient devotion on a some pretty thing. Work has become more than earnings and a way to pass the time. It has become service.... Perhaps the little hats will be less pretty, but the authority of the state will stronger.

Sieburg took a leave of absence from his Paris duties early in 1939 for a tour of Japan. He published Die stählerne Blume (The steel flower), his portrait of Germany's Asian ally, upon returning to Europe (Germany) that summer. The sojourn in Japan and resulting book seem remarkably, indeed uncannily well-timed. There is no evidence, however, that Sieburg was at this time already in the employ of German intelligence or diplomacy.
CHAPTER 6

SIEBURG AS GERMAN DIPLOMAT, 1939 - 1945

Sieburg joined the German Foreign Office as an ambassadorial counsellor (Botschaftsrat) in August of 1939, just a few days before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe.¹ His motivation for this fateful step on his part has been the subject of speculation. Joachim Fest has drawn attention to the self-dramatizing side of Sieburg's character, to his need for grandiose theatricality, for "entrances, scenery," and his special liking for the striking uniforms worn by Hitler's diplomats.

His friends also report with what happiness, with what downright beaming childlike fancy he raved about the silk brocade diplomatic uniform.²

This joyful appreciation of costly, colorful uniforms was a trait shared by many Hitler enthusiasts and was particularly associated with Hermann Göring, whom Sieburg had praised in the critical year 1933. Fritz Raddatz likewise has written that Sieburg was seduced by the Nazi movement's "theatrical

¹ Fest, 265. Gillessen (in Auf verlorenen Posten, 412) has claimed that Frau von Ribbentrop, a native of Wiesbaden who knew and liked Sieburg, influenced her husband's promotion of the journalist.

² Fest, 266. Fest interprets Sieburg's biography of Chateaubriand as something of a "self portrait," especially Sieburg's assertion that the great aim of the French author had been "not just to be, but to be esteemed."
Doubtless these aesthetic factors contributed to Sieburg's choice. Uniforms, pageantry, and symbolic cultic elements such as the "Heil Hitler!" greeting (the Hitlergruss) were an important element in Nazi appeal. Margot Taureck has offered the interesting thesis that, as cultural emissary of the Third Reich, Sieburg hoped to gain inside a defeated France some of the political power that French authors, in his envious estimation, had historically wielded in that country. Literary life inside "ma France," as he would call the country in addressing collaborationist journalists, would be his to control, his own imperium in imperio. Opportunism and self-glorification played a part in Sieburg's decisions in 1939 as in 1933, and these two factors complemented his personal commitment to Hitler's German Reich. There was no conflict between Sieburg's perceptions of his own interest and Germany's national interest.5

The writer-turned-diplomat, forty-six years old at the end of 1939, approached the challenge of diplomatic work in a

3 Raddatz, 22. Raddatz also cites (16) a letter from Benn which terms Sieburg a "courtier."

4 Taureck, 222-3, 241-2.

5 The question as to whether Sieburg acted out of conviction or opportunism has no satisfactory answer. One cannot, in his case, draw a line between opportunism and conviction. The German communitarian proverb Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz (Common good before individual good), effectively used by the Nazis, conformed to Sieburg's view of the Germans as mass, the French as individuals.
spirit of energy and collegiality. Bülow-Schwanke, the ambassador to Belgium, reported at the end of September to his superior von Weizsäcker (father of the later Bundespräsident) that Sieburg "has quickly found his way into his new assignments ... and is a valuable colleague for me." Sieburg's first assignment, which began in Brussels in October, was to collect information from French newspapers and radio broadcasts and write reports on diverse topics, such as France's relation to the Soviet Union and to Great Britain, the French view of Belgian peace initiatives, the role of German political refugees in France, the position of the French Communist Party, the effectiveness of German anti-French propaganda and of French anti-German propaganda, and most important, the general mood of the French public toward the war and toward Germany. Sieburg stressed in his reports the unpopularity of the war among broad strata in France, and the wish to return to the rhythms of everyday life: "the wish of the individual man to end the insecurity in Europe and return to a guaranteed peaceful and undisturbed life."

With the rapid defeat of France in the Spring of 1940 Sieburg flew in June to Paris. Otto Abetz, the German ambassador, who knew Sieburg well, described the writer's functions with the embassy as "press and cultural tasks,"

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6 Taureck, 224. The words are from one of Sieburg's reports for the Foreign Office.

7 Flügge, 205. Taureck, 227.
though he did have other tasks in addition.\(^8\) His co-workers in the cultural section at the embassy were Karl Epting, formerly of the Paris office of the German Academic Exchange Service and now head of the Paris Institut Allemand, Friedrich Grimm and Ernst Achenbach. Abetz, Epting, Grimm and Achenbach had labored for a French-German rapprochement since the late 1920s and early 1930s.\(^9\)

Documentation has survived linking Sieburg to French publicists who saw in the Germany of 1940 a virile dynamism that would transform decadent Europe - a theme closely related to Sieburg's long-standing German-French dichotomy. The Nazis, in this view, were "the heroic elite of the new European civilization" wrestling the continent from the "the sub-Europeans (les bas européens)."\(^10\) The words are those of

\(^8\) Sieburg made numerous visits to both Madrid and Lisbon from 1940 to 1943 on diplomatic assignments. Taureck, 229ff. See also Bella Fromm, Blood and Banquets (New York: Harper, 1942), 325, where Sieburg is listed as "... Nazi agent in Paris. Took up a diplomatic career at the behest of Hitler. ... Now in Lisbon."

\(^9\) Flügge, 205. Eberhard Jäckel characterizes Abetz's civilian advisers as born around 1900, proficient in French, and influenced by the ethos of French-German understanding of the Briand-Stresemann era. Sieburg, born in 1893, a veteran of the war (as Abetz and Epting, both born in 1903, were not), and who viewed Briand sceptically, does not quite fit this type. The embassy civilians were different in social type and in outlook from the German military command in Paris at the Hotel Majestic. Eberhard Jäckel, Frankreich in Hitlers Europa, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966), 70.

\(^10\) Richard J. Golsan, "Ideology, cultural politics and literary collaboration at La Gerbe," European Studies XXIII (1993), 43. Montherlant had attended a boxing match with Karl Epting before the war, and was very impressed with the physiques of German youth as compared with the French.
Henry de Montherlant writing in 1942 in *La Gerbe*, a collaborationist journal closely tied to the German embassy and its associated *Institut Allemand*. Sieburg's French publisher Grasset, who was sentenced by a French court to six months imprisonment after the war, published at least three articles in *La Gerbe*, (which means "the sheaf"), and the journal for its part published two favorable articles on Sieburg, one each in 1943 and 1944. The founder and director of *La Gerbe* was Alphonse de Chateaubriant, a novelist and essayist, one of the directors of *Groupe Collaboration*, which sponsored lectures given by Sieburg. The *Groupe* was authorized by the German military, as of February 1941, to hold meetings in the occupied half of the country; Admiral Darlan issued the group a similar authorization for the unoccupied, Vichy-administered territories in November of the same year. Between June 1941 and June 1942 Sieburg delivered at least fourteen lectures for the *Groupe* in the unoccupied zone (which the *Wehrmacht* occupied in November of 1942), and these *Causeries du Groupe Collaboration* were in some cases published as pamphlets. One such lecture-pamphlet, issued in Paris in April of 1941 and doubtless representative of many that were destroyed, has survived to haunt Sieburg's

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12 Taureck, 236, 239. If this information is accurate, it will be noted that Sieburg, a German diplomat, was able to lecture in the Vichy zone some months before its government, in the person of Darlan, had given authorization.
reputation and with it that of his French colleagues. The presentation France Yesterday and Tomorrow was held March 22 at the Maison de la chimie, a building across the street from the Institut Allemand. Sieburg told his audience - "a small, but influential circle of intellectuals" - that the changes in French life as the country merged into the new Europe would be painful, but necessary, like a surgical intervention. The French would need to overcome their old, feminine vanity; the war, however, had already made them more virile, more able to face their great task.

The times are past in which your own writers could say that France, like a beautiful woman, needed flattery. The misfortune, which you courageously bear, has strengthened the virility of your character....

Sieburg referred to himself in this speech as a fighter and a Nazi - lutteur et Nazi in the original text. Sieburg entered the NSDAP that year, 1941; his formal request in April was granted in September.

13 Flügge, 197.
14 Fest, 266.
15 Taureck, 244.
16 Schonauer, 116. Translations into German of key passages of this speech are in Raddatz, Fest, Schonauer, Gillessen, Flügge, Taureck and Harpprecht. I did not have access to the original, which is in the Bibliothèque Nationale and (probably) other French libraries.
17 Taureck, 247. Taureck comments that Sieburg's entry into the NSDAP was "very late for a prominent publicist of the third Reich." Hitler, in a speech recorded in the 1934 film Triumph des Willens, told the assembled Party members at Nuremberg that while for everyday Germans it was enough to say, "I believe," for party members more was required: "I
Sieburg relished the aura of power which now surrounded him. A young Wehrmacht lieutenant attached to the German Embassy recalled him as

a personality, but he knew that and looked down on people of my sort. I recall a dinner with Fabre-Luce in the avenue Foch where he was quite visibly surprised to see me, moi, in the midst of important people, among others ex-minister Bonnet was there. Another time Florence Gould invited Sieburg, Jean Fayard and me to lunch at the Hotel Bristol, and he got very upset by the absence of Fayard, who had excused himself by phone. Sieburg took that as an affront directed at him.¹⁸

This is the courtier-like touchiness of one who wishes "not to be, but to be esteemed," a trait Joachim Fest¹⁹ found central to Sieburg. Sieburg was unsure of his own role and status, and feared being a superfluous, marginal man.

In July of 1942 the Parisian weekly Candide carried a simplistic literary article bearing Sieburg's name. The article denigrated the poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), who lived in Paris after 1831 and was both interpreter and example, to the French, of German romanticism.

He is a Jew, and because he is not rooted he is translatable. He created in the minds of the French an erroneous, incomplete and superficial image of German poetry. In his case there was no impediment to translation, as his sources were not mystic but merely literary and journalistic. Great German poetry is extraordinarily mystical and thus untranslatable.²⁰

¹⁹ See footnote 2 above.
²⁰ Schonauer, Deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich, 60.
There is no other instance of so great a concession on Sieburg's part to Nazi anti-Jewish policy. True, the unoriginal polemic might claim to be historical not racial, but the year and place of publication (deportation of Paris Jews began in 1941) suggest that Sieburg had indeed become a Nazi, if not a Globke.

Perhaps the German proverb, "Whoever says A must also say B" was valid for Friedrich Sieburg. Fear doubtless played a role. Arno Breker, the sculptor whose heroic art much impressed Hitler, noted Sieburg's conformist fear at a Berlin dinner hosted by Albert Speer in early 1943:

It was clear... that defeat in this battle (Stalingrad) would constitute the turning point of the war. I turned to Speer and remarked: "...Either you find a way to master the situation or you will all end up as criminals!" ... In the heat of the discussion we had not noticed Sieburg's sudden disappearance. Years after the catastrophe, when I was doing his portrait, he told me he had left the house without saying goodbye because he was afraid of an arrest set up by me.21

In one of Sieburg's last articles for the Frankfurter Zeitung, published July 9, 1943, he lamented that many in France had not yet embraced the new Europe in which France should be pleased to play an important role, and he paid tribute to those Germans ... who do not want to give up on seeing France as an important, complementing element in the Europe that is taking shape in the German war operations. 22

22 Taureck, 249-250. Many of Sieburg's articles for the
At Sigmaringen in Southwest Germany, where Pétain, Laval and other notables of the Vichy government had gathered in the final months of the war, Sieburg continued his diplomatic work, and sought to obtain the signature of Abel Bonnard, of the Académie Française, on a declaration of opposition to De Gaulle's provisional government, which had taken control of Paris on August 24, 1944.

Sieburg was generally silent about his role in the occupation; doubtless he was unwilling to make a contribution to a discourse whose terms he could not possibly control. As he wrote in regard to Gottfried Benn, the field of discussion about the "conflicts" of 1933-1945 was "densely mined." Perhaps he was referring to an aspect of his Paris years when he wrote in 1955 that masculinity in that city had been on the decline for two decades, and he linked this trend to period after the late 1930s were unsigned, though their authorship, in Taureck's judgment, is certain, as they show word-for-word parallelism either a) to (unsigned) reports found in the file "Berichte Dr. Sieburgs" in German diplomatic archives, or b) to essays which had appeared in Sieburg's 1939 book Blick durchs Fenster. Taureck quotes Helga Hummerich's 1984 Wahrheit zwischen den Zeilen (Truth between the lines) in regard to an unsigned piece in the final issue of the paper, Aug. 31, 1943: "The commentaries (Glossen) on the third page were also duly anonymous. But those in the know (Eingeweihten) knew that the first one, 'The Apple,' was by Sieburg."

23 Flügge, 206. Rubenstein, 95. Bonnard was later sentenced by a French court to death in absentia. Sieburg's role at Sigmaringen seems to have been marginal and minimal; he is not mentioned at all in Henri Rousso's Un Chateau en Allemagne (Paris: Ramsay, 1980) Taureck depicts Sieburg at this time as emotionally distraught.

24 Raddatz, 24.
Paris's early 1940s appetite for the Nazis:

It is certainly true that in the specifically Parisian civilisation of the last two decades a decline in masculinity is noticeable. Even the disgusting, albeit cleverly rationalized resignation to the phenomenon Hitler pointed in this direction. 25

The end of the war marked the end of the Sieburg's French career, his "most beautiful years." He would visit Paris after the war, but as a mere tourist, 26 not as a public figure.

25 Sieburg, 1981, 431. Sieburg's odd assessment might suggest a confirmation of the thesis put forth by the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte, who spent many months in Paris just after, though not during, the war. "... Friedrich Sieburg, Abetz's deputy in culture, intellectuality and homosexuality (not that he was homosexual - I neither know nor care - but certainly he had in his jurisdiction the homosexual intelligentsia of Paris) ... Not all the collaborators were homosexual, but many homosexuals were collaborators ... for sexual reasons and for the fascination which attracts the conservative homosexual of the right toward violence, virility, toward conquering masculinity." I translate and include this passage from Mamma Marcia (Florence: Vallecchi, 1959), 314, as an aid to further Sieburg research. The German edition of this Italian work, which first brought my attention to the issue, omitted the name of Sieburg.

26 Sieburg, Abmarsch in die Barbarei, 205. "I preferred for once to walk through the beautiful city as a tourist and discreetly to advise a German lady on the purchase of a hat. Our life has gotten shorter. The tree loses its foliage." The passage dates from 1953. See the following chapter, note 9.
The memoir of Paris that Sieburg published in 1950 must be treated with some reservation as a historical document. It is in important senses a misrepresentation. For example, it makes no mention whatever of Sieburg's employment in the German diplomatic corps, and it states that Sieburg left the city for good on an August day just before the outbreak of war - a misleading hint at 1939. As befits Sieburg's timeless, autumnal view of Paris, the dating of what he relates, when given, is in months, never years. And yet even a careful scrutiny of the text will detect no inaccuracy, no outright lie. There is truth in the book, but it is a truth of atmosphere, of temperament and nuance. Its facts are not the historic events of newspaper journalism, but details such as architecture, interiors, gestures, light effects, voice tones, etc. The book's thesis is that the author, a friend of France whom a tragic destiny placed in self-deluding 1930s Paris, may claim the reader's sympathy, indeed pity. This is the anemic France of the pre-1940 "Hollow Years," to use Eugen Weber's apt term. Sieburg's account,
tinged with Christian repentance, is oddly touching.¹

As Taureck has noted, recent post-modern sensibility may be drawn to the denigration, in both Sieburg’s ouevre and life, of the autonomous, decisive subject in favor of destiny, discontinuity, and lack of causality. Our Most Beautiful Years treats its subject matter poetically rather than historically. The book opens with Sieburg dreaming of a Paris covered by a vast quiet moonlit lake, over which he floats in a small boat, looking down. This underwater Paris is "that other time," a dimension whose radical otherness can have no claim on him. "The city still stood intact, more beautiful than ever. But in what world did it stand?" The Lethean water that covers Paris, severing Sieburg from his earlier self, appears from a different angle in a later chapter of the book, "At Maxim's." Seated at a table in the prestigious restaurant of that name, Sieburg prophetically experiences the "glass of champagne and slice of pineapple" offered to each affluent guest as "a sustaining guarantor against the approaching bank of that black stream whose icy breath already touched the carefully sealed cracks and openings of our vessel." A similar visitation of destiny,

this one redeeming rather than obliterating, overtakes French Wagner enthusiasts in "Gala at the Opera." As Wilhelm Furtwängler conducts, the German music leads Parisians to shed their petty individuality. "No one was any longer the gussied-up, insufficient human specimen of just a few moments ago ... now all that dross was as nothing, and the artificial frames of little lives loosened before the sweet, saving, warmish flood."

Sieburg had for two decades put great emphasis on destiny as a deeper, more authentic reality. The difference was that in 1933 he sought to run with destiny, to cooperate in its shaping, whereas in 1950 destiny was the uncanny past which he invoked in a dazed spirit of helplessness and nostalgia. It is as though - to extend his metaphor of water - he had pursued and lunged into some great primal vortex in the early 1930s, then done all he could in the intervening years to whirl in its dizzying spiral without being drawn to its nethermost destruction. Now, the mythic demon-vortex banished, he is perplexed to see Paris still beautiful in the remaining shallow water, while he is old and ravaged. A literary perspective of his memoir comes closer to an appreciation than a factual, empirical, or critical perspective. Certainly, he personalizes his relation to the city and to the war to an astonishing degree. "Into our sadness intrudes the secret distress of growing old:" Such are the weary, self-pitying maxims repeated as Leitmotive in his description of his final day in Paris, and he desires
nothing more than for the reader to see this mood as both historic and Parisian.

There is a rudimentary chronology in Our Most Beautiful Years. The first chapters are late 1920s or early 1930s, the middle chapters the mid 1930s, and "The Last Day" at the end of the book recounts the author leaving the city in August, probably August of 1944. A recent biography of the poet Antoine de Saint Exupéry\(^2\) locates the friendship with Sieburg in the year 1933; thus its position, as "An Acquaintance," in the first third of the book. "The Garden at Night," at the beginning of the last third, makes reference to the Civil War in Spain and to the government of Léon Blum (French Socialist Prime Minister in 1936 and 1937). But the chronological framework of the book should be understood with some modification. Sieburg is more artist than journalist in Our Most Beautiful Years. "Tears in the Ritz," for example, is a portrait of a representative French type - the upper-class woman of café society - rather than a protocol of an actual conversation. Our Most Beautiful Years is, in terms of genre, related to the memoir, the autobiography, the historical novel and the journalistic essay or feuilleton.

Sieburg's attraction to traditional, conservative France is evident throughout, and this is something of a retraction from the German dynamism he espoused in 1933. Indeed, many

\(^2\) Emmanuel Chadeau, Saint Exupéry (Paris: Plon, 1994), 207. Chadeau, who has written four books on economics and aviation, mistakenly describes Sieburg as a refugee - "intellectuel allemand réfugié en France."
of the book's scenes could be set in 1910 if not 1890. The automobiles in the section on Saint Exupéry and "Tears at the Ritz" are mere accessories, intended to underline the opulence of Paris and the aristocratic character of Saint Exupéry. There are no factories or factory workers in the book, quite the contrary: the lengthy chat with the waiter Paul at Maxim's, a man from the countryside, is Sieburg's tribute to peasant France as the real, the essential France. Saint Exupéry's adventurous aviation is really the only modern or modernist item in an otherwise sentimental book, and even here poetics, not technology, is the focus. It is also very significant that the description of Saint Exupéry is one of but two surviving records from Sieburg's pen of a close friendship with either a man or woman. The other friend was von Hellingrath, like Saint Exupéry a nobleman, though the Frenchman was of high, wealthy nobility - a Count! This is the courtier side of Sieburg's historical identity.

As noted in chapter three, the German tradition had associated courtly values with France, and France with courtly values, from the eighteenth century. For Sieburg, women enjoy within this sphere of courtly manners an authority unique to France; this is one of the messages of the chapter "The Garden at Night."

The courtly side of France could be played the other way too, as the false court, showily mundane or even démimondain. Sieburg had used this motif in his late 1930s Paris journalism to underscore the Nazi image of the plutocratic
West. In *Our Most Beautiful Years* he uses it not so much politically as culturally, to show his mature, conservative distance from the sensual hedonism of certain Parisian circles. Thus he criticizes those ladies in Paris who ... could not make the decision to enjoy the honor and dignity of their age, and instead plunged, their wrinkles thickly powdered and hair luridly dyed, into the embrace of young men.... The attributes of this civilization, which in my own mind I called the civilization of the bra, vexed me to nausea.3

Sieburg's relationship to the cosmetic, ornamental aspects of French culture remained profoundly ambivalent throughout his entire career.

Perhaps the most daring segment of *Our Most Beautiful Years* is the chapter "Passion," in which Sieburg recites from the New Testament to a group of *lumpenproletariat* gathered after midnight on Good Friday in a low dive on "a gloomy street of narrow houses." Sieburg as author had reason to value the renewal promised by the Christian feast. "Oh disquiet and trepidation that looked to heaven!... Oh remorse that tasted of vinegar mixed with gall, but not long-lasting, as resurrection stood at the door!"4 Religion, like the artistic magic of Hölderlin or Wagner, offered release from linear, rational accountability. It was not ahistorical for Sieburg in 1950 to view the German past and his own past in a spirit of repentance, and Christianity, particularly

3 Sieburg, *Unsere schönsten Jahre*, see translation below, 174.

4 Ibid., see below, 114.
Catholicism, enjoyed new prestige as Western Europe, including the Federal Republic, entered the Cold War in the late 1940s.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Sieburg's earlier politics are but minimally present in the memoir. But Sieburg does permit the knowing reader a few glimpses into his 1930s rightist milieu. An example of this is the scene favorably depicted in "A Salon," where his eye catches both "the latest number of Gringoire," a proto-fascist journal, and "the little holy water font under the beautifully carved crucifix.... A bit of piety, just a whiff, a hint of it, like a faint perfume, was willingly acknowledged." Sieburg could thus note, in an off-hand way, the link between conservatism and fascism in the French context; he did not write similarly about Germany.

With his 1950s success, Sieburg rarely looked back to his great disappointment in France. But in 1953 Die Zeit published his "Letter to Paris."

I saw too much.... I saw your ogling with the ascendent totalitarian powers, your fashionable enthusiasm for Hitler and his 'order,' the scorn poured on the Third Republic, which was really a very comfortable state entity.... We knew each other too well. Rage has been directed at me because that is

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5 P. Bernard and H. Dubief, The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938, p 263, notes that Gringoire was a weekly founded in 1928, having a peak 1930s circulation of 650, 000. It is characterized as "pro-fascist, anti-semitic."

easier than to direct rage at your own conscience.

In late April of 1964, responding by letter to an inquiry about his behavior before and during the war, Sieburg, who would die eleven weeks later, repeated what he had written in the opening pages of Our Most Beautiful Years: "... but all that seems like a dream to me now."\(^7\)

APPENDIX I

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

This text is a translation of approximately sixty percent of the 1950 edition of Unsere schönsten Jahre: Ein Leben mit Paris. My reasons for not translating the entire work are to some degree subjective. Some passages of Sieburg's text are repetitious. In other passages he has attempted a jolly, insouciant tone which I do not believe he carries off well. The sections I have translated give something of the substance and feel of his original complete text. My translation is literal, but also literary, and I have tried to give an English equivalent of Friedrich Sieburg's style.

The following table gives the correspondence of my chapters with the German 1950 (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag) pagination.

Vineta .................................... 9 - 20
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This night I again saw Paris.

I discerned it clearly deep beneath me as I drifted in a small boat on the flood. It lay at the bottom of the water, and while my craft slowly slid along I peered into the depth and was astounded that I could so easily see the whole of the great city without its mass seeming at all compressed. I saw it all, its domes and towers, the immeasurable line of its roofs and the deeply recessed streets, some narrow and full of shadows, losing their way in tiny windings, others straight, broad, tree-lined, triumphal. I saw the gardens, the parks and the grand squares. Columns so high they seemed...
to brush under me, obelisks and monuments advancing with their peaks made me fear for my small boat. From the train stations tracks emerged in bundles, then went their separate ways. Warehouses and sheds in an endless series stood on the shore of the river whose unerring flow was clearly visible to me. The bridges cast their shadows, the poplars lilted in the breeze, and the high tree-crowns shone pearly green.

I saw it all, bowed over the edge of my boat, but I saw no people. There wasn't the slightest stir in the streets. The squares were empty. No one was crossing the bridges, not a vehicle rolled, not a door or window opened.

The water surface I was gliding along was without end. It wasn't the sea, it wasn't an enchanted lake either, it was simply water, nothing else - still, cool water whose sluggish drift was imperceptible. A haze blocked the distance, and a milky vapor sank down from the weak, veiled sky.

In the quiet moonlight my tender boat drifted, and I had placed both hands on the rim so I could better look down. Silent moonlight engulfed the world, but under me there was sharp clarity. In that silent moonlight my thoughts blurred and the haze grew yet more dense, but beneath me in the depth each thing had its distinct contour.

How gladly I would have looked up to find again in a clear night the Milky Way and the constellations, my shining sisters in the sky! Precious glitter of the heavens, noble figures, made up of worlds of brightness, how I longed for the sight of your mathematics of ecstasy! My boat was memory, its drifting was dream, but the water surface I floated upon
what was it? I was neither happy nor sad as I looked into the depth where the great city lay just as I had once left it. And yet I had not been sure that it survived my departure. Where were the people of that other time? Were they hiding in the houses, perhaps because secretly the news had reached them that a witness of their former life in a fragile vessel would hover over their roofs and seek out the course of their streets? I was now over the Field of Mars and my little boat almost hit the tip of the Eiffel Tower, so high did that iron needle rise up toward me. A weak wind started up now and put ripples on the bleak water, and the white fog became thicker, increasing my solitude. Had I not sworn never to see Paris again? I had left it on a late August day. My last visit was in homage to the female figure created by Maillol in the Tuileries garden. I said my farewell not to people, but to a stone image. I foresaw what a trial humanity would face, and did not want to add to its burden an additional one, the burden of my testament. Stone alone is loyal. The recumbent woman on her pedestal would not disown me when the hour came around. With these thoughts I approached her, and spoke: "Endure!" The artist had given her the blind eyes of ancient sculpture. She gazed not into the future; she rested rather in her own being, freed of all wishes, redeemed from all care. "Stay, endure!" I said to her, for I desired that her beauty should survive the coming defilement of humanity. Pain would never touch her! Thus was my appeal to her, to remain without pain and to live on free of pain in my memory.
Why did I have to see the city again tonight? I had loved it and gone beyond it, as it no longer belonged to my life. There are angels who come and take a man by the hand to lead him gently from a dwelling that is about to collapse. Such a grace had not been mine, for the city still stood intact, more beautiful than ever. But in what world did it stand? The flood upon it was a flood of years, but my boat was the boat of memory. Gazing into the water I caught sight of my reflected image. It was no longer the man of that time. I had become old, and the ripples of the flood made the features of the image a confused tatter. How old - but how consoling! I was suddenly happy for this transformation! Our most beautiful years - they lay behind me. The fiery seasonings still tasted on my tongue, and I still inhaled the city's earthy air, which so dazes with its amalgam of smooth and bitter. I still felt a smile at its follies coming to the corners of my mouth. How strongly I had known life there! Curiosity and appetite had long since won out over my earlier dark premonition. There I had neared creation so closely that I was able to see its manifold splendor in the tiniest thing, in the most evanescent stirring. The nightly whispering of a tree, a footprint in the garden sand, the slow sinking of two eyelids, yes, the form of a woman's glove lying in repose brought to me the totality of the world. I had given myself over too lightly to these beautiful vanities because I chose to see in them a never-ebbing wealth of being. But these stirrings would not have been so fierce, perhaps, if the world holding me had not been changing daily.
Paris had been a special place to feel this transformation because the city resisted it better than other cities, but also because its own sensitivity and imagination for the great issues were more acute. Beautiful years, bitter years. Immeasurable injustice was already underway in the world, and many guiltless people had begun to taste dire need and banishment. And the mirror that this city held up to every mortal soul was now dimmed by the rising vapors of cries and curses.

Tonight drifting in the quiet moonlight I understood that it was not so much this city that I was seeing again, but rather the landscape of a life that has crossed from youth into age. Oh, and not with a single step nor with an easy heart! Again and again I had turned around and attempted to go the way back, to see just once more those faces that did not want to smile at me any more, to cast one glance at that landscape of velvet-gray stone receding now into darkness. The secret grief of aging required—like wine—much time to mature into clear composure. Now I was beyond the darkness and again approaching the light, but I knew it was the light of evening.

Why did I have to see the city of yesteryear on this night? Ce n'est pas toi. C'est tout ce que tu me rappelles, it isn't you, it is all that which you bring back to my mind. But what was that? Far below me I saw the dome of the Pantheon, which for years stood right in front of my window. Winding little streets led from its festive square down toward the south. At one time they had been full of lives in
which my own life participated. I was able to follow precisely the long flight of streets that I so often traversed to get to the station. Departures, arrivals, blissfully painful back-and-forth flowing of blood between Germany and France! The way to the night train going east, the noisy twilight of the Boulevard Sebastopol, the foreboding dust of the expiring day, darkness and a heavy heart, fear of what would await me on the other side, fear of not finding this city the same again. Whistles of the locomotives, red stoplight and green signals. Now everything was still. Ce n'est pas toi... Far in the west, but clearly recognizable to my eye, lay the park of the little chateau Bagatelle with its broad lawns and artfully grouped trees. How often, how often! Footsteps in the rustling autumn foliage, fruitless expectation, till the horn signal of the watchman sounded: "The garden is closing!" Words, tears and the futile cry: "Turn around one more time!" But spring and summer came again and in long rows again the roses returned to the sun-warmed wall with the carved faces spewing water.

My craft drifted on and now I saw directly beneath me the Palais Bourbon, its severe portico and behind that the rectangular courtyard with the cobblestone approaches. How the mob howled that February day as the first shots rang out! That mammoth building was a single seashell where danger roared as the echo of an angry ocean. I was shoved willy-nilly in the compressed mass of hapless parliamentarians to where, suddenly, I stood before a door. Before even deciding, I opened it and found myself in an old-fashioned
hall with dusty furniture and thread-bare walls of red damask. I thought at first the room was empty but then I heard sounds, and I saw the minister-president weeping all alone in a big chair. The high back almost hid him, but I recognized him quite clearly and managed to leave before he saw me. The Place de la Concorde was unrecognizable that day, so wildly did humanity flood it, the pallid faces twisted toward the massive pillar facade.

But then nights came when that square was empty, and I leaned on the low balustrade together with him, the poet whom I loved more than everything, and the rain transformed the broad pavement into a shining mirror. ("...not having returned from a reconnaissance mission over the Mediterranean.") Rolling avenues climbing to distant hills on the margin of the city - how often I walked out perplexed and alone toward that gentle distance. The further I came the more unfamiliar everything appeared, but sometimes an almost German spring sky arched above me, so clear, so certain. This intimate sky, it seemed to me, had followed me to protect me and to say to me: "Wherever you may be, whoever may abandon you, I will always be with you and over you." But that sky often forgot me, as I forgot it when in the sweet silver haze of the Ile de France the larks floated jubilantly.

Tonight I saw the city again so clearly I could make out the monument to Marshal Ney before the lilac hedges. As a fisherman without a net I slid along in my boat in the cold air of the quiet moonlit flood. Where had I been all those
years before I again saw you, whom I swore never to see again! As the traits of a dear face the lifeless image lay in the depth and I looked at it as one searches a countenance that one has loved, forgotten, and then suddenly sees again. That was you? So, it was you that I loved? Much has happened since I walked off from you without looking back. Your face has not changed, but I have gotten older and I am happy about that. I see myself clearly in the deep water that covers you, and now, in regarding my own image, I no longer see you.

Slowly the water began to stir. I heard it and sensed with satisfaction the movement of the boat. And what else was I hearing? Was it the sound of bells ascending from the buried depth, or perhaps even voices? I listened carefully till I heard the crowing of a cock. What land could have sent this domestic voice to me in my pallidly lit solitude? Was a shore nearby, a home with a light lit by someone? The fog became thicker and the water more agitated. The image in the deep grew unstable, then dissolved. And now the streets were only the meagerest shadows. The mighty triumphal arch ceased to be, likewise the towers and obelisks, and the cover of waves drew over the gardens and parks. I could no longer retain the firm contours and street lines, nor did I want to. As in some great outcry of prayer I invoked the veiling flood and saw, as I leaned over the edge of my boat, the city of my most beautiful years lapse away, away. Still visible was the dome of the pantheon, hard pressed now by the opaque flood after having stood an entire lifetime before my window. I covered my face with both hands for a short instant, then
looked again, and everything had disappeared in the quiet moonlit sea. My face alone, my old and mirrored face, was still visible, still there.

It is not you. It is I.

*****

GALA AT THE OPERA

A slate-black sky above the roofs of the Avenue de l'Opera announced that an evening thundershower was drawing near. If not for this the May twilight would still have offered a bit of sun. The season in Paris lasts into the summer, and the people who go out in their evening dress to the theater or to an invitation make a point of coming before one another in the last light of day, as it lingers in the blossoming trees, as gorgeous apparitions. The high silk hats and white sashes of the men, the diadems and bared shoulders of the women aspire to the half-light of midnight chambers. They move with circumspection, with a knowledge of their own nakedness in the late night; they crave the shield of dim entry staircases decorated with lamps.

This time the ever darker heavens accommodated their wishes. A fierce wind rose up and drove pink chestnut blooms into the dust, then across the paving stones toward the opera, where hurriedly the cars crowded together before the massive steps. The visitors hastened up the steps, the men holding firmly onto their hats, the women anxiously clutching their furs to protect their exposed shoulders and the flowers
in their décolletage. Feathers and hair ornaments twisted and yielded like agonized reeds awaiting a tempest. The darkness grew stronger, and the first large drops fell with resonance on the warm pavement. Scarcely were the last concertgoers safely under the arches when the rain really broke loose, and with it the first thunder.

In the firm recesses of the vestibule, where people won back their smiles, the heavy rain was but a faint background to the flurry of voices. Impatiently the stage bell rang. On the broad staircase of yellow onyx the men of the republican guard in their rider's helmets with billowing horsetails stood rigidly and presented upright their long saber blades, menacing weapons set high above the slow upward surge of sparkling gowns, exquisite coiffures and black tuxedos. The rain outside was no longer audible. One could not tell whether the hollow rumbling was from the May storm or from within the great hall, where the drums were being tuned. The boxes, balconies and rows were slowly filling, hundreds of pale white faces looked up to greet the higher boxes. In the first rows of the stalls the gentlemen of the Volnay Club stood with their black walking sticks in hand. Leaning against the railing that separated them from the orchestra, they regarded the great hall with aplomb and bowed again and again toward their acquaintances. Their figures stood out sharply from the dim light that filled the orchestra pit. Clarinets sighed practice arpeggios; fine swirls came from the drums; the strings shyly toned and again were silent, a tender bustle of sound swelling up and fading.
off to the luminous white of the sheets on the music stand. Now a few rows of light in the great chandelier went out; the room did not darken, but a twilight took hold which returned to the thousand faces their composure. Convivial laughter yielded to ease. Each person was now alone, though here and there a feminine arm rose to smooth down a few curls. The red and gold of the great hall had lost its brilliance. A box door opened high above for a tardy guest, admitting one last piercing beam of light into the great space. Then stillness. Furtwängler appeared now and with raised hand bewitched the world into complete paralysis. Tristan and Isolde had begun.

To be sure, the darkness in that huge hall was not total; one might still have made out the outlines and features of individuals, but no one was looking at that now, no one was any longer the gussied-up, insufficient human specimen of just a few moments ago. No, each one there had stopped utterly - to turn then slowly but inexorably into the beneficent shades of a destiny beckoning beyond any possible attainment. The music made of each hearer what that hearer most wanted. Life itself, everyday life - in those days, long past - would not have permitted such a thing; but now these tones, these voices were here to lift the stone! A long-suffering path, harassed by futile straining, falsehoods and whispered assurances, issued now into this evening. What pains had not been taken to dry the memory of past tears and cover over the shrill claim of recent days with a lasting reconciliation! And now all that dross was as nothing, and
the artificial frames of little lives loosened before the sweet, saving, warmish flood. The stage lovers availed themselves of pale blue night to soothe a fatal urging; they twisted on the marble couch and in infinite agony secreted their most blessed song, lasting perforce but a moment. As death came knocking then with "Sink hither, night of love!" there was not a soul tuned to the fate of those high lovers that did not look within, compare, and utter: "I too, I too!"

The Weeping Face

Lost faces gasping in abandon filled the great red and gold shell, the vast curvature returning the mute echo of these many souls, poor and naked under their powdered skin, their burdensome black cloth and jewelry. This, then, was love? In the boundless sway of music, as the magnet compels iron shavings to a figure, love found its way to unity from a thousand tatters, shards and disfigurings. And from the boxes and stalls arose, amid pained breathing, the recognition of a fulfillment that many had never before known. Probably the one or the other had at one time been willing to die for love, but which of them had ever embraced the beloved with the certainty that the touch would bring on death, yea, that only in death was there release!

In the proscenium box above the dimly lit orchestra sat a man who felt his life swiftly stealing away on a dark flood. "How they love!" he thought, "How blissfully certain they are of their common downfall! I was more cautious, more calculating when it came to that. I was always more
concerned to be loved, rather than to love. Sometimes it was just a matter of a hair's breadth - but I always survived. Yes... that crying face on my shoulder. As I held the weeping lover in silence I looked beyond her blond head into the future. No, not really into the future, just into the following day, a day that would find me free and light. It was wonderful to go off alone, to leave the house at dawn, never to return. Down on the street everything was still empty save for a few carts with blocks of ice or vegetables, and the hoofs of the horses sounded on the pavement and in the trees along the street the birds made a first attempt with their sleepy voices. I was alone and free and strode with enterprise onward, coat in arm, hatless. On the Avenue de Matignon a bleary-eyed man was setting up café tables and sweeping the sidewalk. He gave me a certain look, since I still had the tuxedo on from the night before at the theater, and I was swinging my golden keychain. In this manner I walked by, a clever young man, and I rejoiced at the first rays of the sun that were now visible above the grayish mass of the Louvre. I often saw the woman again at parties, at the theater, one time at Maxim's, where she was with a young man, gazing at him with a smile across a raised glass of champagne. It got to me a bit that she could be so happy, but really I should have been glad about that. Had she already forgotten me? I was alone, and as she looked over in my direction I tried to put a serious expression on my face. Apparently I was successful, for I noticed that her cheer abated and the young man began to put questions to her.
Perhaps she still loved me. Maybe in her heart the desire was still burning to cross over that little hair’s breadth that had been the insufficiency of my love. I will never know precisely how much love I kindled in her. Is there a way of testing the love that we experience? Can one measure it on the shadows that one leaves behind on the face one has loved too weakly? Can one measure it on the faint thirst for revenge that was hers, that compelled her to display to me that night at Maxim’s how happy she could still be without me? I never felt such a need; my life took its course as on a string. Why did I come here alone tonight? O sink hither, night of love! But could it be too late?” Thus ran his thought!

Gray Hair

"How they love!" thought the gray-haired woman in the stalls as she reached for the hand of her husband, but he kept his hands folded in his lap and listened remotely. "I too loved him then, as we were getting to know one another and were married in Brittany. That was in the church of St. Phillipe du Roule, and my sister’s children looked just darling as they carried my bridal train. My father made a speech which we all laughed about, and my mother wept. We moved into the Rue Spontini and had a very nice apartment. I always wanted to be alone with him in the evening, but soon his friends started showing up, and we had many guests and often went out. The years went by like that. I was tender, but then again maybe I was too placid. I felt good and at
peace in his arms, but once his desire had been met he pushed my hand away as I tried to caress his hair. At first I was satisfied just to lie quietly next to him, but now I see that the whole thing was futile. Oh, I still love him, and I would not want to live with any other man. My hair is gray, but I still look quite young. My shoulders are smooth and round. The evening gown I'm wearing, by Mainbocher, fits superbly, and my hips have remained slim. I have my peace. But why did I have to come to the opera tonight? I could just as well have eaten and played cards at home. But everybody kept telling me that one simply had to hear Furtwängler. And it's true, those Germans are musicians through and through; there's no holding back, no end when it comes to that - it's all excess to the point of destruction. They're downright dangerous! Don't I experience that on my own person right now? Lovers aren't supposed to love that way. That's an ecstasy that I've never encountered, never ever! Well, one time ... yes, I did make that acquaintance. I remember it, and it was awful. I thought: just one more little bit of tenderness and I'll scream. I lay there petrified, as if my whole life were about to break apart just at that moment. But it was only an instant, and that terrible distress, half bliss, half pain, withdrew back inside of me. When was that? Let me see, it must have been ten or twelve years ago. Well, now I sit here and in vain reach out for my husband's hand. Those violins, horns, those voices! What has come over me? Now I am even crying, right here in the middle of the theater. I can't help it. What kind of tears are they? - I
am unable to suppress them. If only I had been able to cry like this as I lay in his arms! O sink hither, night of love! But it is probably too late."

Diana in the Chilly Night

A few rows ahead of her another woman sat and fidgeted. Huge feathers adorned her stunning, piled-up hair, and when she moved her head the people behind her became impatient because the towering ornament blocked their view. But that was all the same to her. She was a very beautiful woman, scarcely thirty years old, and she wore a salmon pink dress of rustling satin. Her eyelashes were artificially lengthened and tears were the last thing she had bargained for. Her mouth, thickly and luridly made up, was huge. She had a date after the theater at the Florence, and if the love story on the stage didn't end soon she'd be late. And she liked that too, since nothing makes for quite so good an entrance as when one is impatiently waited for. One appears in the doorway and stands there a second or so, the mink loosely draped over the shoulders. The best moment then is when the Cuban music makes a brief pause and all eyes turn toward the entrance - it's such a pleasure to cross the dance floor that just happens to be empty. The opera is really elegant tonight. The Volnay Club is here in full number. It is truly a blessing that the minister of education up there in the fancy box is unmarried, for his wife would surely be unbearable. But the daughters of the German ambassador are really charming! The one is dark-
haired, passionate, the other blonde and spunky - they fit so well! He too looks not bad, in fact he's handsome, attractive, more so than one would usually imagine the Germans. And the distinguished white-haired lady next to him, that must be his Aunt Castellane. How attentively they listen! They are completely submerged in the music, and how ravishing that music can be, just sinking into it! But should I surrender to it, give in, and sit as spellbound as the others, whose mouths in utter capitulation hang open? I really never let go, not for any cause and not for music nor, frankly, for other people. That has worked well for me, and I have never gone through what people call passion or suffering, and the real suffering of not getting what I want has been spared me. Those two on the stage who have one another, are entwined, commingling - and they would rather die than face a day when they would no longer live so wildly. One senses that in their song. They swear never to survive the disgrace of not being able to love passionately, flamingly. My God, I have to hold myself in one piece here; it certainly is no shame to cease caring for a lover. One day it simply ends, one awakens and looks out the window and outside it is still the same world. But then again, that world is really not the same as the day before, not the same at all. Things have moved into the periphery, and the picture, the center, is emptier.

The lady was uneasy and fidgety under her lavish feather hairdo. Slowly she unbuttoned her long white gloves, then buttoned them up again. The visitor right next to her gave
her a dirty look, so she stopped short and with a fumbling movement pulled the white fold of her dress more narrowly against her legs, making the satin rustle and whisper. Her hands then came to rest on her knees. "I have pretty knees, sturdy knees, which I now hold one against the other. I love my limbs. I take good care of them. I need only move them, only to raise my arm slowly and pull the strap over my shoulder — there are men who lose all balance with that! Completely smitten! Yes, I have tried that, but not too often, for I wish to be known as severe. It was not for nothing that the painter Domergue called me a Diana, and then that worthy gent advised me to wear a crescent moon of diamonds in my hair. But that would be overdoing it, and besides I know that he gives the same advice to some little Suzanne. For me one must go to greater lengths. I do not send poison darts at those men who view me covetously. Why should I? I don't want them to go around exhibiting their wounds. Why do they go on about passion and suffering? The couple up there on the stage is certainly suffering in their bliss. They know that they will die, but they go on loving to the very end; they have that much assurance. Caught up in all of this, I see, is the former boyfriend of mine in the first row with the white hair and young face. Yes, I loved him, and we separated about seven years ago in Biarritz. I told him at dinner in the restaurant, and he wept openly, publicly. No scandal really, you know. He wasn't too loud, but his hands trembled as he pulled out a cigarette, and the tears were visible under his lowered eyelids. I felt sorry
for him and, frankly, he still looks pretty good. His features are firm and simple. He has splendid eyes, but I see now that he's holding them shut. Maybe he'll look down at me if I watch him long enough ...."

A Sea

The homesick song of the English horn rose from the cliffs at the blue sea. It was a Celtic sea, wrathful in winter, whipping against the basalt, crushing over unnamed plants and bleached-out driftwood. But now it was as motionless as in the summer, dilated into such blissful blue as though it were Nausikaa's sea, where she dropped her playful ball. And the more searing the oboe lamented, the more southern this blue became. Tristan's wild cries could not distress this unsuspecting smooth surface which wanted only dolphins and flying fish. What did that voice demand, death or unity? The voice seemed to call out all the fogs of eternal twilight, all veils and gray vapors that hover over the northern surf. Let winter come in and send snow to the cliffs! But the sea remained clear and southern and blue, and the purple sail that appeared finally over the horizon lustered with the sea's own reflected light....

Then something unthinkable: the music was over. The room lit up. Like divers the many listeners shot up from the depths of crisis toward the surface of consciousness. The ladies got their coats together and touched up their hair. The men concealed the handkerchiefs they had been pressing into sweaty masses in their hands. The inner dome was
shining and echoing the awakening sea beneath. Furtwängler stood facing the public and the fogs of rapture were beginning to clear from around his face. A young man sitting near the back, having no coat or hat to retrieve, was outside in short time, and the May night, cool and clear, received him. The pavement was still moist, the trees still dripping, but the sky, between lights and roofs, was full of stars. How glorious the air was to breathe! How beautiful Paris was at this hour, when one rushed young and nameless through this tumult of people and cars. He hurried to make the metro. It was just past midnight. If he went fast he could reach his little room in the Rue St. Jacques in a half hour and still sit an hour over his books, before sleep would come and with it another adventure.

* * * *

AN ACQUAINTANCE

The cook in Les Martigues, after I congratulated him on the incomparable barbel he had fixed, was so pleased that he struck up a literary conversation with me, and in the course of the talk he told me the name of a commercial pilot who was test flying water planes in the neighboring harbor of Berre. I had heard the starting and stopping of the motors coming through the quiet air of the Provençal springtime, and I felt a great urge to investigate that noise and meet the pilot whose book Night Flight had long been one of my favorites. But I had to get back to Marseille with my companion, and as
we were leaving the distant motors once again revved up with a howl. The plane evidently was beginning its flight, and I listened in suspense for the roar to end, which would mean that the machine had gained sufficient speed and altitude. For a moment I thought I detected a slight lessening of the roar, and a pang of fear went to my heart, but the next moment the sound was again strong and steady. Then I saw the plane come into view above the distant line of blossoming almond trees and coolly disappear into the northern sky. Perhaps that was his plane. My sudden fear was now past, but for the first time my heart had beat for Saint-Exupéry.

It was a year later that I met him, at Denise Vivonne's. He sat with her hunched over a table, watching as she clipped from newspapers and cheap magazines assorted words, sentences and pictures, which she then juxtaposed for her own odd purposes. She had just put together an image of a crying baby pushing away the proffered milk bottle, beneath this a line from a current newspaper: "Mussolini rejects negotiations." Laughing, Saint-Exupéry extended his hand to me, but his dark eyes lost nothing of their earnest expression. He was a large, heavy man with the light movements of a delicate child. And now Denise had cut out a giraffe, put the head of Flandin on it, and given this the caption: "The prime minister surveys the situation." I would have liked very much to talk with the writer, but the lady of the house began a telephone conversation that stretched on and on; its lively details flitted like sunshine and windy shadow across her dramatic, beautiful face. The conversation
was about a man named Sascha, a name that elicited sighs and laughter in swift alternation. We sensed after a bit that she was drawing the conversation out to get us involved in her game, and we were polite enough to stay on, and then to inquire about Sascha once the chat had ended. When we finally left the sun was setting, flaming with its last radiance along the windows on the shore. We walked slowly, sometimes my companion would stand still so as not to lose the train of his thought. He was talking about Germany, a country he did not know and, he told me, would never get to know. It was just not in his stars. "I really should go there at least once, but I am almost afraid to." And as I tried to interrupt him with a question, he continued: "My life is like a bowl filled to the brim with water. The slightest nudge would make it spill over, and then even the smallest droplet would bring on a massive flow. Well, I would get that nudge in Germany, or that droplet. No, not a drop, a whole flood!" I observed his large, round face, the alert, sniff-ready nose, the serious eyes; no person, no experience, nothing, it seemed, could dull the virile purity of this calm face.

We reached the Place de la Concorde. The sun was already gone, but in the deep blue sky a voluminous cloud, white as porcelain and immobile, retained the sunken light for a while. The broad square was now strangely empty, like a giant hall without walls, the statues and railings in sympathetic luminosity with the weakening white of the cloud, the traffic somewhat abated, its point of light a curving
trace on the vast pavement. We leaned against a stone balustrade and continued speaking. Evening swallows darted above us, the cloud dimmed to gray, and between the pillars of the Hotel Crillon the windows lit up one after another. I looked from the side at the large, graceful man resting next to me. His glance faced down and his hands were in the pockets of his comfortable flannel suit. The simple harmony he exuded was palpable and binding; the wish, never to let him leave my side, took hold of me. He was younger than I, and I cannot say that I assumed he had known a great range of human experiences. Had he made life easy for himself? Certainly not. I knew about his often difficult existence as a commercial pilot. People had told me of his unbending sense of duty and his respect for authentic authority. But the composure that attended his person had deeper roots. Even now, at the beginning of our acquaintance, I could tell that his heart had no traffic with cunning and halfway measures. It was, in a word, his kindness that from the first moment had captivated me with the unmistakable warmth of a true, elemental character. Oh, you may believe me, it was not such a bad world then, twelve years ago! Malice, calumny and greed still had to hide under a veil; the hypocrisy of public and political life strove for a certain credibility and now and then even trembled slightly at the prospect of being unmasked. When people came together, especially in the social strata where I spent my time, they kept up the old custom of not right away ripping the clothes off one another; they used, rather, the civilized give and
take of conversation to probe a bit as to whether that would really be necessary. No, it was not a bad world. One could still see a well-dressed woman, or a festively done-up window, without a mean and destructive rage surging like blood to the eyes. In short, even a person belonging to no political movement, having no social program, could still breathe freely. But it was far from being a world of kindness, and the magic that Saint-Exupéry wielded took me completely by surprise. His merit did not have to be experienced up close; it stepped forth, wherever he appeared, as a new climate into the epoch. The man was one of the first to make aviation an accepted theme of modern writing, and he seemed to enter our world from another, very different world. Wondrous indeed, how his powerful physique and impressive hands moved among things and people with such mild circumspection. It was as if the fissures and jolts in the makeup of this world had made him at once anguished and cautious.

Night was now upon us. A slight rain that we had scarcely noticed had swept by and brought the budding trees and teeming seedbeds to a passionate fragrance. The darkness surrounding us, heavy with the bitter tenderness of first blossoming, oppressed my heart with a nearly unbearable advocacy. The pavement shone damply, its radiance melting the reflected lights of passing vehicles into softly glowing arcs. So filled was I with the inexhaustible loveliness of earthly being, that I wished to remain standing eternally at this spot. Only here, I believed, could I hold out against
the storm of this feeling. The man next to me seemed to feel similarly. He did not smoke, speak or move. We shared as brothers.

Dim Not, Light!

Slowly the pavement dried and the reflections dimmed. But there was still that fragrance flooding over us, vapors each instant more compelling: a sweet lost essence, all the world's faraway places, all the imponderables of feeling, and utter, complete surrender. Our life soared on the crest of a wave, and we gazed boldly into the depths of possibilities. The rapture of that rarified height lasted for the blinking of an eye, not longer. But compressed therein was more than a city which even in springtime could deny nothing of its autumnal identity; more than a fragment of time aching with the presentiment of future catastrophe; more than the effusions of seeds and buds opening to the command of a high, strange law. This moment had a special bliss and pain of a one-time fulfillment, because I knew for certain, though not a word was uttered, that my partner shared the event totally and imparted to it the same significance I did. At length we broke loose and strolled on without aim, over the bridge, past the massive façade of the chamber of deputies, down the Boulevard St. Germain. At this hour the city was empty. Not until midnight would its life well up once again. We were hungry, so we halted before the Brasserie Lipp and looked inside through the windowpanes. At one table Georges and Nora were sitting with Paul-Léon and Serge Lifar, all good
friends who seemed to be having a lively chat. It looked as if all four were talking at once. It was a pleasure to watch them, and it would have been completely natural for us to join them, especially as the fried eggs Georges was just starting into made our hunger doubly acute. But somehow, and without any discussion, we made free of the window and ambled onward. Turning into the Rue de Rennes, we finally entered a small establishment where open baskets of oysters stood on tables on the sidewalk, just behind the station of Montparnasse. They were cheap oysters, the kind called Portuguese, but they were fresh, and the pale wine of Saumur would taste superb with them.

The innkeeper, a youngish woman wearing a woolen shawl around her shoulders, rejoiced at seeing the poet. "What has become of you, Monsieur Count, that you have kept away for so long?" she asked with evident sympathy. Saint-Exupéry laughed and politely began to tell about his trial flights with water planes, and about his wish to fly again along the coast of Mauretania to Cape Juby. He spoke in a subdued voice, and the manner was the same as with Denise a few hours earlier. The lady sized him up with affection, respect too, and while listening to him she propped her cheek into her left hand. She turned then to me, saying: "Monsieur Count the aviator would be for us, his friends, excitement enough. But on top of that he's a poet, and a great poet! Poet and flier - that is really too much!" She was enticing me into a friendly plot whose aim was to talk my companion out of the simultaneous practice of two such adventurous professions. I
caught this, and we all three laughed.

From time to time the oyster shells, heaped up like a sea-sprayed cliff, would be taken away. Saint-Exupéry extended to me a "flute" of white bread and I broke a piece off, the crunch sounding very nutritious. "The taste of bread shared with a comrade is unlike anything else in the world," he said. "When I gave Guillaumet his first piece of bread after his rescue in Mendoza, I realized the meaning of friendship. It was like a sacrament." Then he began his story, and the peace of his gentle masculine voice enveloped us. He was the first storyteller I ever met who spoke as well as he wrote. Mightily and without hurry his narrative advanced, the innkeeper now and then getting up noiselessly to put a new carafe of wine on the table. He told us of his companions, and I sensed through his words something I had never before encountered: a genius for friendship.

The night went on and yet another tale had begun. I spoke of my visit in Les Martigues and of my apprehension on hearing the noise of the engines. "No," he said, "that time everything went fine. But a year earlier!" And he proceeded to relate how on the same water surface he had gone through a nasty shipwreck. The water plane, with him seated at the controls in a sealed cabin, sank, and it was almost five minutes till he could free himself and be rescued. Almost five minutes! But he talked close to two hours about this brief agony, and when he was finished a fearful sweat lay on my forehead. The innkeeper got up abruptly and said one more time in a voice of lamentation: "No, poet and flier in one
person, that is too much." That might we roamed around Paris for a long time. At first he led me to the Place de Panthéon on the left bank, then I led him to the Rue Castellane on the right bank. The rows of buildings were still dark, full of sleep and shadows, but up above the roofs the sky was already bright. And with the measured warming of the empty dawn we came to believe more and more that we had known each other for years. He walked next to me, hatless, without a coat, hands in his pockets; I was consumed by the desire to step beyond the restrictions of my being and have him forever in my life.

Later I saw him often, indeed for a time daily. But those first few hours in the streets of Paris contained, from the beginning, all of my fear that I would at some time lose him.

* * * * *

PASSION

My reasons for choosing, on that Maundy Thursday night, to take a stroll through these quarters would only be understood by those who have experienced similar Easter forebodings. Ever since my childhood Holy Week had put me into an odd state teetering between dejection and joyful expectation. If in addition the sky was full of dark clouds and the air was heavy with April, my uneasiness knew no bounds.

On this day the sky had been sombre and I knew that on
the next day the wooden clapper would sound in all the churches and the priest would lie on the steps of the altar like a felled tree. The bushes and trees of Paris were ripe to unfold their buds, but first these days of pain had to be gone through. O cheerless waiting, whose creeping hours were measured in the falling of tears and drops of blood! O disquiet and trepidation that looked to heaven and listened in on the heart to seek out the Easter hope stirring there! O remorse that tasted of vinegar mixed with gall, but not long-lasting, as resurrection stood at the door! I couldn't stand it at home, and at the stroke of midnight I was in the narrow streets of Paris, walking restlessly alongside the crouched-down houses, looking in where there was light coming from the window and the doors were open. It was night, an overcast April night, but Good Friday had begun.

The city was silent, no music, no shouting even from the little dance bars in which normally the accordion played ceaselessly till the morning hour. I roamed through my entire neighborhood, so strange a mixture of monumental stillness and tiny-alleyed notoriety, from the enchanted domed church of Val-de-Grâce to the ruins of the Roman arena of Lutetia, from the Blvd. Marceau to the charnel house of St. Severin, and I ended up on the Rue de Bièvre, a gloomy street of crooked houses that led down to the Seine. I stopped in front of a dimly lighted window. Inside were a few tables and benches, and an open gas flame on the wall lit up the room that apparently served as an overnight shelter for homeless people. I had to peer in for a long time before
I could make out individual figures. What I first thought was a heap of rags was in fact a collection of men lying stretched out on the benches or sitting at the tables drinking red wine. Then with time I could distinguish their movements, and slowly I could pick out their voices, which clued me in that a lively discussion was underway. For a while I stood on the street and looked into the drab room, and then I stepped inside.

My appearance caused no stir. The talking stopped for a moment, to be sure, but I had no sooner sat down on one of the benches when an old man in a broad-brimmed hat, the kind formerly worn by artists, pushed a half-empty bottle of red wine in my direction and demanded that I join in the drinking, saying: "You come just at the right time. Please explain to these ignorant men that tonight one should not sing or tell off-color stories, because Good Friday has begun."

The assembled company protested, denying they had behaved badly. They were all men, most of them no longer young. The raggedness of their clothes, the old filth on their faces, and the cadaverous pallor of their hands told me that I was among bums, clochards, who were at home in this room. They were careful and proper with me in their speech, and it was a clear pleasure for them to demonstrate to me that they weren't such vulgar and raw fellows as, say, the workers of the market, the barge loaders or the truck drivers at the warehouses. No, these men didn't have to do dirty work; they did no work at all and felt no need to. For all
the wretchedness of their state they showed in their bearing
a certain boastfulness. They knew, after all, that when they
walked by on the street one stopped and noticed. They were a
kind of institution that one let be. I saw now that one of
them was holding tenderly in the lapel of his jacket a small
dog, a half-blind thing with dirty, worn, pinkish skin.
Another one, clean shaven and with the expressive face of a
comic actor, had on the table before him an object which
after a moment I recognized as a small bridal bouquet under a
glass cover. It was a very pretty bouquet of closely
arranged flowers held together by a paper lace cuff. The
glass cover was broken, just on the edge of falling into
pieces, and the possessor held his arm as a safeguard around
the object.

More than anything else this wedding bouquet told me to
leave the place immediately, as I had no business there. The
longer I looked at those tiny flowers under the broken glass,
the more clearly I felt that I had no right to intrude on
these people. But I did not find my way to the door. A
certain shame hindered my fleeing, my confessing that I had
come in only out of curiosity. Or was I supposed to tell
them that nervous ennui, not curiosity, had brought me there?
But before I could decide, the old man spoke up again:

"Help me to make clear to these simple people, sir, that
on this night one may not be noisy and sing, because it is
Good Friday."

"We were doing nothing of the sort," the man with the
bouquet pointed up worthily, "we were just arguing a little,
because we don't understand how St. Peter could make such a career in the church after denying Christ. You will admit that it is odd. Certainly, he was not as bad as Judas, but he did say three times: 'I do not know this man' - just to avoid difficulties."

"But he was only human," added another. "Such situations come up in life. Imagine the entire courtyard full of police, and if he gave himself away he'd be arrested, and what would have become of the church then!"

The group listened carefully but also took time to gaze at their empty glasses, making clear to me that I should give them something to drink. I called the innkeeper, who came out of the back room, and I ordered wine. He came back right away with several bottles and remained standing near us. His shirt was open, revealing an artistic tattoo on his chest, and his little nasty eyes looked at me with mistrust.

"No politics here," he called out bossily, "I don't want an argument in my bar. Be quiet - better yet, go to sleep."

At this the old man rose from his bench solemnly and said: "Can't you stay awake with me for an hour! Christ asked this of his favorite disciples on this night, and he came back to find them asleep again, and their eyes were heavy with sleep and they didn't know how they should answer him. And he came back to them a third time and spoke to them: Oh, so now you want to sleep and rest?"

"What sort of stories are those," growled the innkeeper, "what are you saying? That sounds like sacred scripture."

"Yes, that is from sacred scripture. You will find it
in the gospel of Mark, fourteenth chapter. It is a very sad chapter, and it was in this night, and therefore we here should stay awake and pray so that we may not fall into temptation."

"We don't pray here, but if you really want to, then pray by yourself. I already told you I don't want any politics in my bar. That only makes for fighting."

"But that has nothing to do with politics," I interjected, "it is the story of the passion of Christ, the night on the Mount of Olives."

"Fine, fine," said the somewhat mollified innkeeper as he sat down next to me on the bench," the passion story. One should not scoff at that. Please be quiet for once, all of you, so that this gentleman can tell the story. You know it, I assume?"

"Yes," I said and whispered then with shame. "I know it by heart. I will recite it for you."

"But they spoke: Lord, behold, here are two swords. But he spoke: enough! And he went up according to his habit to the Mount of Olives. And his disciples followed him to that same spot. And when he got there he said to them: Pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. And he moved a stone's throw away from them and knelt down and spoke: Father, if you wish, then take this cup from me, but not by my will, no, by your will let it be done! And then an angel appeared to him from heaven and strengthened him. And it came even to the point that he wrestled with death, and he prayed all the more fervently. He was sweating blood
droplets which fell to the earth. And he stood up after
prayer and came to his disciples and found them sleeping and
sad. He spoke to them: "Why do you sleep? Stand up and pray
that you do not fall into temptation." And even as he spoke,
behold, a great mass appeared and one of them, by the name of
Judas, was leading them and now approached Jesus and kissed
him. Jesus then said: "Judas, with a kiss you betray the Son
of Man?"

In this way I told them the story of the Lord's death
and I told them of the captain who stood under the cross and
said: "Truly this was a pious man." They listened
attentively. No one interrupted me, and there was a complete
silence in that miserable room. When I had finished the
innkeeper said: "Yes, he was a pious man, but did it help
him?"

"It helped us," the old man cried out happily as he
tugged on his raggy coat.

"Oh yes, you," replied the innkeeper with scorn, and
suddenly he became angry. "Out with you, you rabble. It's
three in the morning and you've been hanging around here long
enough. I don't want to have to say it again. I want to go
to bed now!"

"Couldn't you stay awake with us for one more hour?"
said the old man very softly as he stood up. The others got
up too and went toward the door. The little dog began to
whine; the bridal bouquet was grabbed with a jerk, causing
the glass dome to break apart completely, and with a clinking
the pieces fell to the floor. "Out!" the innkeeper said
again, this time softly, almost whispering.

I faced this leave taking as though numbed and lamed. It was still night. Where would they all go? I alone remained behind and watched them as they disappeared into the darkness. And one more time I heard the voice of the old man: "Can't you stay awake with me for just one more hour?"

The innkeeper sat next to me on the bench and said nothing. A fearsome motion was at work on his coarse face; his fists opened and closed as if he wanted to smash something. The footsteps outside were now faded out. The wine puddles shone quietly on the tables; the gas flame hummed. We both said nothing, and I did not know how to make an end of the situation. I finally got up to go, and the innkeeper now collapsed his head onto his two fists on the table. A heavy sobbing made his body and shoulders quake. He was weeping into his hands.

I left quickly, but on the street I could still hear his childlike cries.

* * * * *

AT MAXIM'S

It took a bit of time to be reconciled to the non-appearance of my guest. The seat next to me was going to remain empty. I had been studying the walls of the restaurant, feasting my eyes on the mahogany with overlaid tendrils and flamingo necks of brass. I looked long at the wall paintings, whose subject matter under the yellowing of
cigarette and food vapors I knew well: women with huge nestlike hairdos standing freshly disrobed in a forest clearing. The paintings had once been quite striking, but their colors were now old and weak, just as the forceful red of the satin benches along the walls had turned to something like pale raspberry. The tables were all taken; the couples sat closely packed, and the empty space to my right was noticeable, making my solitude stand out. I really would have preferred to leave, but there was no possibility that would happen, as I was already deeply submerged in my reveries.

My musings became all the more heated and dizzy as I pictured the bleak November night that awaited me outside. I could sense the barren twigs etched sharply against the moonlit haze, and just the thought of my homeward steps echoing through that emptiness was enough to keep me in this warm room rustling with well-bred, cultivated voices. The words were not at all clear and audible, but they emanated a certainty and self-confidence one can find only in this city, and the smell, drifting through rather than filling the room, captivated me. Broken fennel stalks gave a bitter tang, and it mingled with the powder and perfume of the women to form an artful, pure essence, and to this the cigarette smoke yielded as it rose in thin strata toward the ceiling.

I was alone and wished to remain so, but the faces of most of the people assembled here were familiar. To my left, so near it seemed she were my guest, sat Madame Schiaparelli, chatting with the Duke of Windsor. Her long black leather
gloves lay on the chalk-white table cloth, and the left glove had retained the arching fingered shape of her hand. The Duke sat silently next to her, an expression of dejected bewilderment on his face, as though he had discovered long ago that nothing could be sadder for him than pleasure. People glanced at him on the sly. They respected an ennui which seemed of a higher order than their commonplace satiety. The waiter now placed a brightly garnished platter in front of the couple, but the Duke didn't even glance at it, and when he finally began to eat one could not be sure that he knew what he was eating. What a difference from the table at my right, where a magnificent, firm head of lettuce rested in a great bowl, the waiter making a great to-do about cutting it into quarters. He proceeded to mix pepper, salt, vinegar and mustard in a little vessel, pouring then the creamy liquid ever so slowly over the pieces of lettuce. With equal care he added two spoonfuls of oil, as the diners watched with open mouth and moistened gaze - totally open and unabashed their expressions of bliss. Casimir in particular could not restrain himself, his strong face with its little goatee turning bright red. He cast a quick glance at me, as if entreating me not to let any of this dream slip by. Then he presented his empty plate with the excited eagerness of a waiting child whose turn has come round.

In truth I too studied the remaking of the lettuce with high suspense, and some curiosity as to how the lady accompanying Casimir, a tiny beauty in a pink organdy hat, would come to grips with the situation. But she had no
trouble at all dispatching the big awkward leaves, the sauce
dripping perilously, into her painted heart-shaped mouth.
How those two pals delighted in their repast! What tenderness
and understanding in their eyes as they gazed at one another
and ate! When the lady finally put her fork down, the prongs
were covered with a fine coating of lipstick. Casimir leaned
back in his seat, discreetly unbuttoning his tuxedo and
genially allowing the world to pass in review. From the back
of the hall music started up very slowly, the *valse triste*
by Sibelius, and the conversation went on undisturbed. A
flower lady, looking like a petitioner in an Italian comedy,
peddled violet bouquets from table to table. I bought one of
them, but the scent was not sweet at all. No, the damp
blossoms smelled bitter, like earth.

On the other side of the restaurant, directly opposite
me, sat Bernard and Eve. Eve had her hatless, slickly
coiffed head propped in one hand and seemed to be scratching,
perhaps writing, on the tablecloth with the tips of her
bright red nails. A silence raged between them at that
moment. That was the way people knew them, and they had no
choice but to live up to their reputation as a stormy couple.
Thus their behavior tonight made everyone present feel doubly
at home, and things were just as they were supposed to be.
Madame Schiaparelli was garrulous, the Duke was melancholy,
Eve was tormented and Bernard was growling. The only thing
missing was Madame Albenkian with her Swedish count. But
then - how could it be otherwise? - I caught sight of them
half hidden behind a pillar. She carried her huge body
bundled up in the armor of a silver evening gown, voluminous golden bands and bracelets clinking on her bare arms. She directed her large Oriental face at the man beside her with an expression of devouring maternity. His blue eyes were perforce childlike and foolish vis-à-vis such torrid desire. I looked quickly away and saw Bernard nodding heavily to a man at a nearby table, as if to say: "Here we go again!"

November, dark world with your inscrutable faces in the black fog! Here inside it was so warm and bright that one could not imagine ever wanting to leave the place. Could it possibly be that there was no frigid world out there any more, no bleak night diffusing fear and loneliness? Had this enclosure full of women, soft voices and sliced fruit managed to break loose and make its own trajectory through space without worrying where it would eventually find a resting place? Or were we just dabblers, playthings of the blind power that might at any moment open the doors, collapse the walls and let the merciless night break in? There were, after all, so few of us, and we all knew each other. But no one had even the slightest fear - and now the music had begun again, almost inaudibly, the waiters hurried back and forth and three Rothschilds appeared and still found a table. Olivia Brant laughed so loud that everyone looked in her direction, and only then did we take notice of her strange and marvelous hat of shiny green cock feathers. Jacques Path peered into the room with boyish seriousness and then turned back again toward his wife, or rather toward her chocolate colored satin dress with its plunging décolletage and mammoth
ruby clip. How benevolent, how lovable this world was, its
desire to please and to reap applause was so heightened as to
be almost innocent. Every mouth smiled, every bit of skin
radiated, the shoulders of the men in tuxedos exuded power,
the knees of the women in light dresses felt a mutual
closeness and warmth. If someone here were to stand up and
declare, "You people are stones! When will you dare to return
to your senses! - well, such a person would, after the
initial shock, have been reassured and offered a glass of
champagne and a slice of pineapple as a sustaining guarantor
against the approaching bank of that black stream whose icy
breath already touched on the carefully sealed cracks and
openings of our vessel.

My glass was empty, so the waiter came by and filled it
anew, looking with devotion at the reddish beam he was
directing downward. Like all in his station he wore a black
apron, which gave him in these surroundings a peasant look.
Indeed his steady face, unruly dark hair, even his deep voice
were as if matched to the apron. "You are from the country,
no?" one might inquire, and the answer would be proudly in
the affirmative. People here called him "Gaston" when they
wanted him, because all the wine servers had been called this
for decades, but his real name, he had confided to me several
times, was Paul. I took a gulp now and our immediate
exchange of smiles confirmed the choice flavor. "You should
eat cheese from Cantal with that. You waste it if you just
drink it plain," he said, and before I knew it there was a
big piece of that pale, very hard cheese in front of me, so I
immediately cut myself off a chunk. Paul just stood there looking at me; he could tell that I enjoyed his presence.

"Nothing can beat a piece of that cheese accompanied by sips of wine," he said quietly. "It need not be a good, expensive wine like this Pontet-Canet. It can just be a simple plain local wine. As in our village. The land is stony and plowing is no fun at all. The wine is nothing special. But it is a pleasant district, at least for those who make their home there." He looked cautiously around to see if anyone required his services. A few patrons were leaving and a mink coat was being fetched. Paul smiled and glanced at the empty space next to me. "And the fences there are of stone too," he continued, "I spent a lot of time sitting on those little walls when I was still back home, waiting for my girlfriend. When she got there," he added with a subdued laugh, "it was usually raining. But we stayed anyway. In spite of the rain I could hear her hurried breath, because she'd been running."

In spite of the rain he heard her breath! Wind, night and rain enveloped the sparse land, and in the fields huge stones lay waiting for the sturdy hands that would turn and lift them out of the way. It was a peaceful night, but so dark that one could not even make out the signpost, which was very near. Only a few lights shone faintly from the village below, and though the rain was falling now in heavy sheets, the breathing was audible. This man has forgotten nothing. It is nested in the hidden folds of his being, and sometimes at a favorable night hour it emerges into view. Our own distress, our secret torments and the aching foreboding, as
the glass is raised to the lips, that this could be the last time - all of that is faceless, it is the interminable impact of a black flood straight out of midnight. You think you are still on the firm bank, but in reality you are already drifting into the veiled zone. Farewell, dear shore, and keep for just a little while the imprint of my foot in the sand, so that I survive in a small measure before stepping into oblivion with the whole mass of my brain, soggy with memories like a sponge.... But he was still standing there in front of me, and even if our talk had halted, it had not come to an end.

The hour was late. A few couples were heading toward the exit, and now for the first time one really took in those glorious evening dresses, a warmth of bodies realized in fabric, bodies moving richly, the leisurely play of hips and the thousand-fold way a throat and trimmed head can pull free of the confinement of the neckline. Olivia, who had just gotten up, stood with her golden sandals on top of a napkin that had fallen to the floor, the napkin itself covered with shrieking blotches of lipstick. The Duke of Windsor pulled his carnation out of his buttonhole and threw it in the champagne bucket. Paul collected a few tips and then came again to me. It was no longer warm and bright in the restaurant, and in this dimness the women had become like prisms reflecting the light in infinite varieties. Shadows began to form, now that so many had departed, amorphous shadows, but distinct enough to tell me that the room was no longer crowded.
Suddenly it was very quiet, perhaps a coincidence, but for a moment almost as if everything were holding its breath. Paul opened his mouth in surprise, but said nothing. I too looked in the direction that the sound had come from. On the table behind a pillar a glass had fallen and shattered loudly. Madame Albenkian was holding the stem of the glass in her hand. Her dark Oriental features were even darker now, and showed pain. She directed a memorable glance at the turned-away, puerile face of her blond escort, and I saw a hard grief that would never again soften into human form. Never again a word of complaint, never again tears or the sinking of an overwhelmed face into two open hands. The room's silence was utter torture. Every person wanted to speak up, but no one dared. The woman got up now and made straightaway for the exit. Her heavy shape seemed suddenly light; one heard her breath; she was like a dark wave no longer certain of reaching shore. Behind her, at an embarrassed interval, the Swedish count followed, and it seemed he wanted to call her. As he hurried he stuffed a handful of cigarettes into his golden étui.

Paul, who had watched these two with astonishment, turned again toward me and blocked my view of what happened then. I had wanted to carry on the conversation with him further and to ask him about his parents, but now I remembered the November night that awaited me outside. It loomed cruelly between me and my apartment, and thus I rose to go home. I did not want to hire a car, though the night was raw and damp. The moon had no doubt set by now, for the
milkiness in the sky had yielded to a thorough darkness. The cobblestones under my feet glistened with moisture. It was a long way. I planned to ask the first person I met whether people had indeed turned to stones, but I did not run into a single person, in this huge city, on my way home.

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DINING WITH DEMIGODS

I had never seen so many illustrious minds gathered together as in this small room. So great was the impression that I all but made an about face in the threshold and exited. Imagine eight men, among them two members of the Academy, one of the Institute, and two recipients of the Nobel Prize. The others were likewise great dignitaries of the spirit: professors, associates of learned societies, honorary doctors, bearers of awards and medals. And of course each of them wore in his boutonnière the little rose badge of the Legion of Honor.

This then was "the little gentlemen's dinner" that Prof. Hervieux had invited me to. "We French and Germans do not know one another well enough," he explained, "and I shall bring you together with some friends, all of whom have concerned themselves to a greater or lesser degree with Germany; but for all that, they are puzzled about what is going on there currently. These men will be delighted to meet you. One or the other among them may ask you about things from pre-1914 days, or about people who are long since
dead. In such instances I beg you not to register any astonishment; understand, please, that these men are like God the Father himself: a thousand years are for them as one day. I do not know if you can imagine what a corresponding associate is. The term seems to indicate a high degree of contact with the outer world, but in reality it means the opposite. Well now, the friends with whom I wish to bring you together are all corresponding associates of this or that, and their image of things is in need of a slight freshening up. So please come. We will have a nice talk."

A nice talk - that was all that I had been promised. And I gladly went at eight on a Monday evening to my friend Hervieux, to have dinner with him and a few friends. I love conviviality more than anything else, then even more than now. Yes, I confess that in those days I approached every door to a gathering of like-minded people with a secret throbbing. People were for me the most beautiful of all adventures, and that was the way I felt on this evening. When I entered Hervieux's study and saw these assembled demigods, I lost all security. Recent articles on the Andromeda nebula, on the patriarchy in ancient religions, the excavation of the capital city of the Hittites, eight volumes on the youth of Marshal Richilieu, the idea of time in Indian philosophy, totemism as a therapeutic prophylactic, the psychology of conscience and fourteen novels of life in the Second Empire! And all that in a smallish room filled with books, boxes and folders, everything looking at me with friendly curiosity. My consternation was not little. How
would I ever be capable of carrying on a conversation with these demigods, to offer them any sort of account! I decided to prick up my ears and to take home with me as much as possible of this elevated dinner. At first I was a little afraid that I would be asked how things were with Kuno Fischer or Ehrlich, but the gentlemen proved not to be so unworldly as that, and they showed a great deal of tact when inquiring after the present circumstances in Germany, circumstances that were exciting, but not exactly endearing. So right away I was happy that they did not assume any great enthusiasm on my part for certain German developments and happy too that they did not expect me to run down my country. They all spoke with hushed voices and a fineness of expression, which was for me a welcome surprise, accustomed as I was to the political rhetoric of France. Slowly I began to feel more comfortable and to hope that these great men with their forceful foreheads and clever eyes would consider my situation and steer the conversation in such a way that I, unable to contribute much on their level, could at least follow them. It is, after all, a bit of a shame not to be able to offer much highbrow talk to a circle of corresponding associates, but it is downright embarrassing to sit through a whole evening and understand nothing. I was still not sure if I should bless or curse Hervieux for this invitation.

We seated ourselves in an old fashioned dining room at a round table which, though without flowers, had several glasses at each place setting. An elderly spinster took charge of the service. She handed the man of the house the
respective bowls and bottles in sequence, and left the rest to him. From time to time she would appear silently, direct a glance at the table to see if anything was needed, and then absent herself again. The tableware and glasses were very old, the patterns slightly faded, here and there a chip on the edge. And the very pretty table cloth of thick Dutch linen had small holes, but they were neatly patched. One could see right away that Hervieux had a very solid housekeeper who took good care of his inherited, though modest, possessions. The room with its old furniture from the time of Louis Philippe, the upholstery of flowered canvas embroidery and the black-framed beadwork on the walls - all this was at once strict and convivial, as one finds from time among those of the higher clergy who know how to live well. Suspended from the beautifully decorated stucco ceiling, a time-honored light fixture brightened our table. Close by, an opened bottle of wine with a silver stopper stood on a sideboard, this obviously a feature of Hervieux's daily meals, and next to the bottle was a porcelain dish holding several medications and a neatly rolled napkin in a ring. One could see that the host had made no great fuss about this dinner, and had not tried to remove the aura of daily use from his dining room. The foreign guest noted this thankfully, and felt doubly at ease.

"They don't make napkins like this anymore," said Professor Tissot as he unfolded a huge, heavy cloth with a splendid hemstitch. "When I was a child our guests would stick a corner of the napkin in the collar or even - the
napkins were so big! - tie it around the back of the neck. But that ritual was denied to us, a pity really, because what with worrying about our suits we often could not enjoy the meal."

"I have an unpleasant memory of those knotted napkins," replied M. Pongeville, the astronomer. "I grew up in a small town in the Pas de Calais, at the house of an uncle, for I was an orphan. I must say the uncle was a real ne'er-do-well who spent the few francs he earned as a mason on brandy, and there was little left over for the household. He was always behind on the rent, and the owner of our wretched shack, a wealthy dealer in cloths, finally threatened us with eviction. My uncle came up with the smart idea of sending me to the house owner to ask for a delay in payment. I was to throw myself at his feet; that, quite literally, was my assigned task. At that time I was a wan, frail child, but with a certain pride. I was, after all, though I was only eight, getting regular Latin instruction free of charge from the village priest, and those lessons made up the happiness of my little pitiful life. I made my way in tears, and was in fact brought before the cloth merchant, who was sitting alone at table devouring his seductively aromatic diner. He gave me a dirty look as he sat there chewing with stuffed cheeks, and I was unable to say a word. Around his neck he wore a large napkin, the tied corners of which peeped out from behind his fat neck and moved back and forth like wagging ears as he attacked and swallowed the meal. For me the scene was so unusual that I could not detach my gaze from
those pointed napkin-corners and, forgetting all shame, I began to laugh. How I got back to the street I now no longer remember. I was soundly thrashed at home, and we finally had to clear out of the house. But the incident brought good luck to me, as the priest took me into his house, and I learned so much from that marvelous man.

The Edible Map

In the meantime the starters had been brought out, and a fish pâté was put in front of us. I began to breathe more easily; perhaps my intellectual insufficiency would not show, though the philosopher had made an ominous attempt to get my view on the morphological research of Frobenius, and for a moment I was facing acute embarrassment - but all eyes were now beaming happily at the fish dish, and those quiet faces, behind whose brows the finest thought-wheels in the world were operative, were totally captivated by the tureen. The baked surface of the fish glistened golden brown, and as the first guest poked through it, a precious fragrance of herbs and hot wine came forth. Everything in that room focused now with silent concentration on eating, until the historian leaned back with closed eyes and with a sigh of bliss said:

"I bet this item is made with a marinade whose main ingredient is dry sherry!"

"You've got it!" Hervieux answered, "it used to be made with cognac, that's the way it is in my mother's recipe. But I find that cognac gives the fish a slight bitterness not to my taste. To be sure, I must add that we're talking about
two different layers of fish, one of filet of salmon and one of finely ground shellfish, plain common shellfish. In the Gironde one can get a better sort, but in Paris one is - "

"Don't run down shellfish," called out the archeologist as he wiped clean his bushy moustache with the napkin.

"Shellfish with curry is a regal dish, assuming that one does not forget to add a small spoonful of plum jam to the sauce. I don't need to tell you that this dish comes from the port cities of the North of our country, for no one in the South would have the nerve to mix curry, bacon and plum jam. I grant, to be sure, that one has to take care to get exactly the right proportions, especially seeing as how milk too must be added, and that as you know is a very tricky business."

We ate with great relish, but each of the learned gentlemen had something on his mind. The archeologist, who had never shed his southern accent, felt compelled to defend the cooking of his native region, which in his view was equally capable of great boldness. "I willingly acknowledge that the Provençal influence can be disastrous, but garlic is indisputably the king of seasonings, and it should be used more widely, even in fish dishes." The opposing view, up to now silent, grew loud, and he continued: "Gentlemen, you allow yourselves to be intimidated by the Corsican policemen here in Paris, who reek of garlic, and whose talk is thus so unpleasant. But consider that the ancient Greeks did not scorn garlic. I even maintain that it was the basis of their diet. In the house of Atreus we find not only scandalous family matters to be dominant, but also the fragrance of this

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bulb, without which there is simply no understanding of the culture of the Mediterranean. We are now grown more moderate, but a hint, a whiff, or rather a faint suspicion of garlic is all but indispensable."

The learned party now proceeded to talk through the seasonings of France's manifold regions. Each man defended his province, the great writer of novels who had done his share of traveling tried to make a case for the cuisine of foreign lands, but he found little echo. Guarded approval, however, went out to a small number of Spanish recipes, among them a concoction of sweet pepper pods, tomato and a bit of olive oil which brought out an extraordinarily refined taste from dried cod. A Polish soup praised by the author aroused no interest at all, though he tried to drum up sympathy for it by stressing the garlic added to ground sorrel.

I had little opportunity to participate in this discussion for, much as I enjoy good eating and even myself am something of a dilettante gourmet cook, I was no match for these food lovers who at that moment saw their country as a giant food map, who knew each province and could interpret each recipe in terms of the climate, soil and character of the inhabitants. A many-colored geography of eating now rose up before me; France revealed herself in the talk of these men as an expanse of fertile green earth where no herb sprouts, no kernel grows, no blade of green sees the light without being embraced into the daily life of the people as a seasoning, salad or poultry feeding. It was not enough to know where Montaigne or Ronsard had lived, where the
sandstone of the cathedrals was quarried, what rivers gave forth the hazes of the famous landscape paintings. No, France was not complete until one had pronounced where the best mushrooms grew, where white cabbage is stuffed with bacon and carrots, where the tenderest chickens were roasted, and the best corn salad with white beans was fixed. And if the latter-born progeny no longer understood the sauces and vegetables that were the everyday fare of earlier generation, well, that too was of a piece with the history of the country, a history made up, notwithstanding indulgent revolutions, of life-affirming habits; and where change, implying as it does pain and complaint, is very slow. To all this I could but listen, contributing nothing but my great desire to learn. I noted every single word, but today I fear that I must have made a somewhat stupefied, numb impression on the gathering.

In the interval wild duck with orange sauce was put before us, and met with such enthusiasm that the housekeeper was called in to receive congratulations for her great art. She stood in the door smiling gratefully, her hands laid together across the front of her body, and explained: "Yes, yes, the orange has to be most bitter, the rind is ground up with it, but very finely ground, Messieurs, as finely as possible. White turnips, mind you, are also suitable as the main ingredient of this sauce, but one must brown them a bit with sugar." Thus the matter was examined extensively and from all aspects, details from old family recipes were surrendered, and special recognition went out to the denizens.
of the Yonne and the mountain people of Cantal, who best knew
how to fix up good fat ducks for weddings, family stuffings
and funerals. When the housekeeper left the room to get
dessert the homely contentment reached its height, and though
the guests had eaten and drunk in moderation there did appear
on the massive scholarly brows discreet droplets of
perspiration and here and there a button was loosened
unobtrusively. Well-being shone from all eyes: "I live well,
may you too live well, and in peace." Their libraries, their
charts, their microscopes and manuscripts they had left
behind to become for one brief hour relaxed sons of a kindly
earth, and that earth thanked them.

So I proceed now to tell that toward the end a lively
debate about cheese took place, which stretched on until
eleven o'clock - well, one will understand that there was no
time left to talk about the wines, the four different wines
we were served. And this was generally lamented as we
parted. "There is never enough time for the really important
things," said the archeologist as he looked for his hat in
the hall.

They extended their hands to me in friendship and
assured me how much they had enjoyed having spent time
together with such a well-informed foreigner, but I had the
impression that I had made no deep impression on these
gentlemen.

The host, who took me aside for a minute, expressed the
hope that it had not been a lost evening for me, as he had,
in truth, offered me the élite of France's life of the mind.
I reassured him emphatically, and I confessed that it was I who had not been forthcoming enough as would have befit such a distinguished group. He replied indirectly, saying: "Next time we really must discuss French-German matters thoroughly."

When I got out onto the street the little team of men was just disappearing, joking and laughing, into the tunnel of the metro, their open coats fluttering in the breeze. They were descending two steps at a time, as the final train of the day was just then approaching.

* * * * *

A SALON

They all wanted to have a salon in which "everybody" would meet, and a few of those gals succeeded in doing so. Some of them had only four smallish rooms high above the treetops of a quiet square near the Boulevard St. Germain. In these small spaces they transformed everything for the duration of their receptions. In the bathroom bottles of champagne lay cool in the tub while the guests' hats were stacked on the bidet and in the medicine cabinets. The man of the house sat in the children's bedroom, bored by the whole event, seated on a hobby horse and reading the latest number of Gringoire. The guests pressed into the dining room to get at the refreshments, or assembled as well as the tight fit permitted in the bedroom, where they were astonished to find themselves camped out on the bed of the hostess. To be sure, all items hinting too openly at bedroom activities had

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been concealed, but it could happen that, say, the slippers
had been overlooked and were peeking out now from under the
bed, less clean and radiant than the appearance the hostess
had assumed for tonight. And the little holy water font
under the beautifully carved crucifix, if it caught-the eye
of this or that frivolous causeur at the wrong moment, might
be debilitating. But these religious effects had not really
been overlooked in redoing the bedroom for the cocktail
party: a bit of piety, just a whiff, a hint of it, like a
faint perfume, was willingly acknowledged, though not loudly
touted. The glasses and the cigarette butts of the guests
would perforce seek out their own places. After all, the
furniture and decor, a bit down at the heel though not in
poor taste, could make no great demands. It was unbelievable
how many people could fit onto these narrow confines. They
would sit on stacks of books, lean against the walls and fill
the doorways and the tiny corridor. And the numbers would
keep increasing! Unceasingly the hostess's enchanted cry
greeted yet another new guest and, whenever possible, she
flung her arms around the guest's neck. But however tight
the press of bodies became - and as the evening would get
going there was no longer room to make one's way to the
hostess and greet her - there was always a space left around
the fireplace, so that the "great man" of the day could lean
back freely against the marble, the gold-bronze clock, of
course, behind him. He would hold forth before a rapt
audience.

It wasn't so easy to have a salon; it was incumbent on
one to find guests. But how was one to attract them? One needed to create the belief that access to a particular salon was a precious, rare privilege. The reputation of exclusivity would attract great numbers, here as elsewhere. The deciding attraction depended on the caliber of the "great man" whose presence the lady of the house had managed to secure. Optimally the "great man" was a political figure whose speech had just brought down the government. Before he could take stock of the damage he was standing at the fireplace of a convivial Parisian woman, reading in the eyes of his audience the light-hearted accusation that his speech had thoughtlessly caused a great fuss, and responding to this charge he would shift to a more serious tone and to innuendo, denying emphatically that he himself would now be obliged to grab the reins of power (something no one but he had thought of), and then leaving his auditors with the impression, without really making any pronouncement, that the republic would soon come to an end. In Parisian society a great hunger for politics ruled the day and this forced people to talk about politics and to acquire a smattering of knowledge about certain people, certain connections. Politics with its ambience of power possessed an elemental tug especially on women, whether young or old. They possessed a sixth sense for power and could sniff it out with the assurance of a nervous system quivering as a storm approached. Often one saw in these salons a pale young man with horn-rimmed glasses or a sloppily dressed fatso with dandruff on his collar talking confidently on and on, surrounded by a swarm of
excited women. One could be certain that such young men were on their way up in the political world and would soon make waves. Their outward appearance and their words were unimpressive, but about their persons that rarified aura of power had begun to build up, and the women sensed this before we did. We saw nothing special in these guys, and only later, after the events, did we give them any attention.

Thus the political activity of the Parisian salons was no mere empty pastime; rather, it was a barometer on which one could read the current and future significance of persons and ideas. This touchy game was, to be sure, mostly a matter of French domestic politics, the big question being who really had the power in the state and who would have it tomorrow. Foreigners were not often found in this sphere, diplomats almost never. The diplomatic corps lived in a world of its own, and a foreign ambassador rarely mixed freely in, or was taken up unreservedly by, Parisian society. A foreigner who wanted to participate had to deliver opinions, be they intellectual, literary or political, and they had to be offered with vigor and witty exaggeration. This really was not a thing for diplomats, who by the correctness of their opinions - almost always those of their governments and thus obtainable in the newspapers - and by the caution of their polemic were simply boring, a failing not made good by the splendor of their silverware or the spaciousness of their apartments. To be able to speak well was the relentless demand of that world. The newcomer might be forgiven a high degree of social awkwardness, might be
allowed to behave like a small-town mayor or a professional cyclist - two very common types - and he could even interrupt the ladies in mid-sentence or lift his little finger as he raised a teacup, but he had to express himself well if he wanted to find favor. No, the Parisian salon was no paradise for silent, shy or slow natures. The flow of speech gushed forth. That was the great joy of it all, and calculation, more common there than people pretended, assumed the mask of chatter when it wished to gain time, to conceal or to deceive. Many a sly fox told tall tales to the ladies whose acquaintance he wished to make. If he really wanted the ruse to work he would confide to the hostess the report, of course under the seal of confidentiality, that he wanted spread around. And just before he left he would take her by the arm into the corner and speak to her with an air of urgent importance. Once he was out the door those who had witnessed this whispering would storm the lady till she finally relented and gave out an indirect paraphrase and, of course, a request for discretion, and with this the report was assured of circulation. Often it was not so much a story as a trend, a tendency, especially in the years after 1933 as French democracy began to experiment and to acquire the unfortunate pride of being at the height of current developments. In the cyclone blowing in from east of the Rhine the French politicians held onto their hats, till a few decided to go without hats. A small group of Socialists split off and toyed with corporatist ideas, and a few Communists changed course and began to quote Sorel, to speak
of vertical organization, and to raise their arms in salute. Was anyone taking these things seriously? Indeed, they all were, and they all lamented that developments in Germany were accompanied by so many excesses and had become so dangerous for France's security, since otherwise...! There was a lot going on in those salons, and things that could not be said in the chamber or in the papers were openly professed and discussed back and forth in the bedroom of Madame P. or in the old garden terrace of Countess F. To be sure, one distinguished between interesting ideas, about which one had to keep an open mind, and the essentially base spirit of domestic politics, which still went by all the old rules. So there was, at the end of the day, more interest in the man who was about to become finance minister than in the man who proclaimed a "Revolution of Order" for the coming year, or a new world for the coming generation.

The great man could also be a writer, a calling as highly esteemed in the salon as politician or government minister. There were white-bearded ruins in dark frock coats, on their lapels the highest - and slightly tarnished - decorations of the Legion of Honor. They pontificated in funereal voices about the crisis of the novel and pointed with long yellow fingernails into the future, while we addressed them as "master" and inquired about the status of their latest work. And there was also the well-known comic playwright who peered in at us so grimly that we assumed he had just finished writing Hamlet. His chilling gravity, his absolute refusal to show us even a fraction of the cheer he
had written into his plays, gave him something of a reputation of a social critic; as the great man at the mantlepiece he had a severe air. Incidentally, this dramatist never set foot in apartments where the hostess or one of the guests opened the door; he graced only the most superb drawing rooms, irreproachable, representational interiors where he found a public he deemed more important. In my experience the people in these grand spaces were the same as elsewhere, though less pressed together and less noisy, hushed by the Goyas and Manets - authentic - on the walls. Old-fashioned Venetian blinds with wooden slats blocked the powerful afternoon sun, and the filtered light fell in weird spots and blotches on the old furniture and old faces. One needed a bit of time, on entering that vast space, to distinguish the vivid strips of sunshine, the equally vivid shadows, the mammoth bouquets of white lilacs standing on the floor, the silver tea service, the family portraits, a color sketch of the shooting of Maximilian of Mexico, a burial of Christ by El Greco, and a portrait by Modigliani. Our friend the comic dramatist extended his hand to the hostess with a facial expression suggesting he had just lost a member of the family, but in fact the expression signaled: "My dear Countess, the times are so grave, and I am too important, for conventional greetings!" - and he took his position at the fireplace. In this house the husband of the hostess was also present, a noteworthy fact quite atypical of Paris, where the husbands played a very small role in the salons, and often used the free afternoon to visit their
mistresses or go to the cinema. This man of the house, however, drew special attention for having spent half a million to get himself elected as deputy from a Parisian suburb. He had been hopelessly defeated. Accordingly, his opinions on the present chamber were very harsh, and he saw bad times ahead, but of course in those days one could hardly go wrong predicting that.

In these circles one could gain a certain right of admittance by being, if not oneself a great man, then at least the friend of a great man. I often encountered an older gentleman who was very polite but otherwise, one might say, devoid of feature. He usually stood in the corner, and no one seemed to want to deal with him. Well, pity being part of my nature, I made several attempts to chat up the gent, but I could not figure out who he was or why he had sought this particular salon. His presence baffled me, and at first I thought he might be a close relative of the hostess. Then it occurred to me he might be a police spy assigned to prevent the guests from walking off with the Boucher drawings or gold snuffboxes that were in such profusion. Finally I summoned courage and asked someone, and was told with a loud laugh: "Oh, don't you know, he was the friend of Marcel Proust!"

So the man had been a friend of the great writer, and now that I really looked at him he did not seem so colorless. On the contrary, I detected about his person a faint afterglow of his long departed associate. I found him interesting, and wanted to find out more about him, but
nobody knew to say even the slightest thing about him except that he had been the friend of Marcel Proust. One might have thought that the man would be talking all the time about Proust, giving thousands of details as evidence of their friendship. But he never said a word, and no one ever asked him any questions. What a contrast to the fluent candor of Madame de Crozon. She too owed her presence to a former connection; she had been the lover, in her distant youth, of Marshal Canrobert, and she still liked telling people about him. "Oh, dear pudgy Certain!" she would call out, this being the Marshal's remarkable first name, "such a fine man! He liked smoking his pipe when he was with me. At home they wouldn't let him do it." It was odd, almost uncanny to hear this, for Canrobert had been an oldish general even at the siege of Sebastopol, and each of us within earshot of the old lady's stories began to calculate, to reckon. Suddenly we were way back in the nineteenth century.

* * * *

THE GARDEN AT NIGHT

Nocturnal garden, I shall never forget you, because it was in you, whose shadow had so often sheltered and echoed my dream, that I saw with my eyes the end of an age. The end of an age? It was perhaps the end of only one piece, one act, in which I had played a part and, in truth, wanted to keep on playing. We lived peacefully with one another in the Paris of those days, but for how long would the pleasing
conventions and the graceful skill of women keep us from tearing the clothes off one another's bodies when we differed in politics? When would we men, who up to that point had understood well to cut off an argument just short of the fatal threshold, when would we take that extra step and start shouting in each other's face, saying things that wound in the deepest essences? Oh! the women, whose gentleness had beautified our manners, whose life-affirming gaze, even at the edge of terror, had always kept our life together harmonious and in control, whose authentic or enchantingly feigned fragility subdued our gestures and forbade our voices' getting too loud - when would these women grow tired of the calming, soothing game and flip over to sicking the male opponents onto one another like dogs, or even themselves start clawing and ripping out hair? This fearful question crept ever closer. The tensions between people in the last few months had gone up noticeably and, if not audible, were there to feel in the air, perhaps only as the hard silence that drew as a shadow across a face just now smiling, perhaps as an obvious steering of the conversation to a sudden new direction, like the abrupt and noisy switching of train tracks. It was still a matter of course for each of us to spare the other and to place fair-robed custom above the naked truth, but our style was threatened, and one needed constant presence of mind not to upset the delicate and civilized cart.

Everyone was mindful of what was happening day by day in Germany, but people said nothing about this when I was in
hearing distance. How bitter this special consideration was for me! But at the same time I had to be grateful for this treatment if I did not want the illusions about my charmed life in this foreign land to vanish completely - illusions that were already rather dusty and compromised. With the Italians matters were not so tragic. They did not take themselves overly seriously, and were content for the most part to remark that the forum of Trajan was now completely excavated, that there were no beggars on the streets and the trains were arriving on time. Those were extenuating circumstances that no German could benefit from, because in Germany everything had always run as if pulled from a little string. And now ugly reports came from across the Rhine, innovations that made one ashamed, events that suggested to the imagination that more than just old-fashioned jollity was now coming to an end. It now happened rather often that the talk abruptly ceased as soon as I entered the room. Inquiring gazes came to rest upon me, and sometimes I was treated with the special care that one shows to someone in whose family an affair has transpired that cannot correctly be spoken about.

How often I had the desire to break through this silent treatment and call out: "It's not my doing!" - but the question as to whether, and how much, all that could be laid to my account had long since become for me a painful tangle. And now on top of all this the Spanish Civil War! The Duchess of Fernan Nuñes stopped making appearances because her husband had been shot in a Madrid jail. And the poet Pablo
too had gone one day because he wanted to help defend the Spanish capital. Rubinstein left a tea party at Madame Panôtre's when Evgenio d'Ors stepped into the park, even as the guests mingled and chatted under the lovely trees. Paul Marion, who at that time was still a Communist, fled when confronted with a soprano from Dresden, although precisely in those days the humanitarian slogan was making the rounds to the effect that art stood above party, and that music bound the world's peoples together.

Now it was in this nightly garden - but first let me tell about the garden! It was not very large and it was fighting bravely against the growing, encroaching city. Formerly it occupied the entire terrain from the Seine to the hill of Passy, and its impenetrable verdure had sheltered a little white chateau where Princess Lamballe lived, till the Revolution came and put an end to her short life. Yes, she was hacked to pieces in a dark alley not far from La Force prison during the September massacres. And through the years new streets kept springing up, each taking a further little bite of the park. Many of the old trees were still standing, however, when the good Dr. Blanche set up his nerve clinic here and tried in vain to cure the great writer Maupassant, who would often rage, and then for a time be quite peaceful and attempt to dig holes in the earth of the garden, assuring the doctor that in the spring children would sprout up there! And then the little chateau, which had gotten rather run down, was demolished and a solid structure was put up in its place, and it was here that for some years Mrs. White had
lived, an American woman who loved music and hosted lovely concerts for her wide circle of friends.

It was not easy being alone in that old garden, but I was equal to it on occasion, and I savored in the darkness of night the rustling of the high treetops behind which the reddish light of the city flashed uneasily. I slowly traced the paths whose sand rose up dimly out of the utter blackness, and I shuddered before the round and naive shapes of the clipped hedges, which at a bend of the path were suddenly there, as monsters. The lights of Passy hovered above me, the high buildings on the riverbank gave light out of what seemed a thousand windows, but the dilapidated house where Balzac had once lived hung darkly above the garden wall, as if the proprietor had just now gone to visit Madame de Hanska in the Ukraine. More forceful than the weird shapes of the clipped yews were to me at that moment the shadows of the dead, their language, telling me to be silent, to keep myself covered by darkness and betray to no one the secret of their presence in the garden. How gladly I obeyed them, aware as I was how much of life had passed them by. The princess had been but a child as her murderers came for her. Balzac knew only the labor of writing, spent his nights at a desk, and even Maupassant had through sheer excess missed the best part and did not know the tenderness of a love that swears never to cease. Poor companions of my night! around whose shadowy refuge the giant city pressed in like a besieging army bringing closer and closer, under cover of darkness, its hostile machines!
Death in the Mirror

So I was in the garden at night, but this time it was lit up and decorated for a party. Mrs. White had given a concert in the house. There had been a string quartet by Mozart and a composition for cello by Hindemith, and now the guests were streaming out into the open air. In front of the great wall of yew hedges forming the backdrop of the garden a buffet had been set up, and here a number of servants gave out champagne, salads and cold cuts. The guests were recovering, recuperating from the enforced silence that the music had meant for them; hence the lively, excited chatting. At last it was possible to say all the little nothings, to admire the evening dress of the ladies which on this night was really quite splendid and shone mysteriously and even fairy-like in the swaying and unsteady illumination of the garden. It was a warm night. Dried up linden blossoms and moths were falling into the champagne. High in the trees the birds had awakened, and there was a scurrying in the bushes. A flight of twelve steps led down into the garden, and opposite this descent there were two square-cut high hedges with a mirror placed between them. The mirror gave back the life in the garden in an oddly distorted form. The reflections slid back and forth across the polished pane; the bright colors of the evening dresses mixed with the black and white figures of the men, and the shadows of the quietly moving twigs made for a febrile and ghostlike flitting of forms, as if all life here were but a facsimile of the dreams.
haunting those unforgetting dead who once inhabited this piece of Paris. If it were not for the vivacious din of voices I would have thought myself alone in this garden, in a dialog with the shadows which pushed forth desperately into rustling youth, to drink thereof and so return again to the world of life, which once had denied them everything and coldly gone on without them. But the women saw no shadows in the mirror. They saw only themselves. They came down that staircase very slowly, to make the most of the mirror image which came against them brilliantly, but evasively, without clear contours. Beautiful Solange wore a close fitting dress of black silk with free arms and shoulders, lending her cool demeanor a hidden energy. Below her left breast she wore the ancient star of the Order of the Black Eagle, and she clasped the medallion tenderly as her form came fully into the mirror. Right after her was Nora, her gown's great silver-gray mass of tulle held together by a giant bow of cherry-red satin. Nora too looked with some satisfaction at her image in the mirror, and smoothed down her temples a bit before going on. But the two young women did not go on. No, Solange and Nora remained standing on the same step conversing with one another and smiling. Each of us in the garden observed them and delight in the pleasing sight of those two delicate figures lingering in the inconstant light, who were looking directly into each other's eyes as they spoke and not, as a minute ago, downward into the garden. Following them came now other guests, but the two women did not step aside and yield the space; they talked on as if not
mindful of the busy liveliness all around them. No doubt they both felt that they were beginning to attract attention, but their bodies were kept rigidly motionless as their heads moved, indeed jerked with some agitation, above expensively decorated necks. They spoke very quietly, but they were no longer smiling. Solange was now grasping her metal star firmly, and with equal force Nora's fingers dug into the knot of her great bow. No one could understand what they were saying to each other, but the suppressed vehemence of their voices was audible. Suddenly one of the two wanted to move on, but the other one secured her in place with a fierce movement of her entire body, not unlike a stamping down.

Mrs. White thought of approaching them, but something must have warned her not to get mixed up in this argument. She tried instead to conduct the other guests to the buffet and divert their attention from the scene on the steps. But everyone in the garden knew now that the two women were fighting.

Yes, they were fighting. They still put on a smile when they detected that people were watching them, but their eyes were hard and dark. The more worried the group of guests became, the greater was the silence in the night garden, and one might even have heard the fine humming of the high leaves and the beating of moth wings against the glass of the lights. But now, gradually, the arresting subject of the two women's discussion had become known it was the Spanish Civil War, and one heard piece by piece from those beautifully done-up mouths the names used to label this war, and all
those slogans that the war had in such abundance brought forth. I almost had to laugh as Nora's nobly sculpted lips clearly thrust out the term "non-intervention"! But really was not funny at all, for she used the word, which in truth masked a brutal hypocrisy, with such scorn that Solange froze in utter shock, and then for her part spoke out names and expressions that were printed every day in the paper but, for all their publicity, had lost none of their nasty reality. We knew that Nora stood to the "left" and Solange to the "right" but up to now we had all managed out lives so reasonably and had so much common culture that it would have seemed silly to see these two women as opponents. Each person in this circle had an individual opinion and some of us were passionate about these opinions, but no one would have dreamed that two so enchanting parisiennes would start fighting in this night garden, that they would lose all sense of restraint. Had this world suddenly become a lie? Were these graceful creatures, whose tender image appeared as an elfin game in the mirror, nothing more than jugglers? Was their harmonious example, to which each man had thankfully submitted - was it all base trickery? Had I overestimated the conciliating, humanizing power of an effortlessly employed tradition, in whose ambience our common life had for so long gone on? A rupture tore apart the fairytale illusion of this nocturnal garden, and through the opening I felt most cruelly the icy blast of the coming nemesis, and I shuddered. An awful word, belonging to the base future, hung in the air: bloc formation. No longer did people face people - no, bloc
faced bloc, and humanity, everything that had made up humane life, its fantasies and tenderness, its egocentricity and liberty and patience, was divided now into two crushing masses. Nora and Solange had relinquished all the things that made them beautiful, lovely and seductive creatures, and had gone over to their respective blocs. Their choice and artistic soul had assumed the braying mask of mass movements, and from out the frozen gaping features of this uniform mask came the droning of slogans whose hammering monotony was transforming the world into a dusty landscape of ruin, with watch towers, barracks, training fields. Half housing project, half penal colony! The raging of insatiable mobs running up against walls and fortified obstacles had long since become the squad convoy and its dear home, the camp. The planet seemed bent on running through such stages with a furious speed, while here on the steps the two women repeated to each other opinions not at all their own, but rather those of the shrieking vulgar mask.

Nocturnal garden, I shall never forget you, because in you, where the shadows had soothed me and my dream found sympathy, I saw the end of an age with my own eyes. Oh, how easy it is to say that an era, a world is gone, just because a few things have changed. But here was an ending as if staged, two women playing the tawdry piece, the text written by time itself, the costumes by Piguet and Lelong. And the two women played their roles well. With each word that flew back and forth with increasing volume civilized humanity lost a little ground. With each word the rights and values of
that humanity were given over to the blocs, with each word
the women surrendered a bit more of their right to be
beautiful, to wear beautiful clothes, to awaken favor and
applause, and to share a secret with someone who might admire
them. With each word their gowns, hitherto a cosmos of
nuance, half tones, moods and fantasy, turned into the simple
dichotomy of light and dark - into a uniform!

The fairy tale was over. It was now a matter of saving
whatever one could of the situation. There was not much time
to lose. The women had raised their voices and one could
understand almost every word. They had long since exhausted
their discussion about Franco's rights and the duties of the
democratic governments, especially Léon Blum's, and were
going off now into wild generalities and personal insults.
Solange made a threatening arm movement and we feared the
worst. With lightning speed Nora chose to be defenseless,
and stepped back with pointed shock. Solange laid her hand
with triumphal expression on her splendid hip; Nora reached
with touching helplessness into her magnificent hair, and
thus the disconsolate spat turned out after all as a contest
between two goddesses who, conscious of their stirring,
conquering beauty, determine to let fly against one another
the arrows of disdain.

We summoned our courage, even though we knew that an
irreparable loss had transpired. Mrs. White thought the
moment ripe to pull the two women from the steps and end
their argument. But before she could get to them Nora
herself began to descend and approach the mirror with a
fearful expression and little cries of distress. What had happened? A small bird, scared by the busy partying from its nocturnal garden rest, and deceived by the shining mirror, had crashed against the glass with an ominous thud. It now lay dying, the wings still beating weakly, in the garden bed at the foot of the mirror. Nora knelt down to pick it up, and the upright glass, so close now to Nora, revealed to us her form in perfect clarity: a crouching miracle of tenderness whose silver tulle gown unfolded under the cherry satin like a pale rose. Her hair, its youthful gray streaks glistening metalically, all but touched the mirror, and the lights and colors of the startled night met festively in the glass to make a recognizable picture. Nora stretched out her strong ringless hand to the injured bird, and glanced briefly at her reflection, ever so briefly, but enough to let a glint of satisfaction flame up in her eyes: she admired herself. Solange, who had now come down the stairs, stood behind her and looked at the twitching, dying little creature. Nora with a soft murmur took up the bird cautiously into her hand, whispered "poor little bird" and cast an annihilating glance at Solange.

* * * * *

TEARS AT THE RITZ

In the middle of the night the telephone rang.

I woke up immediately, my heart beating like a drum.

Though I was completely awake, I was so excited that I
couldn't find the light switch. This must be the declaration of war. This is the end. We have come to that. Roger at the night news desk on the Boulevard de la Poissonnière had promised to inform me as soon as the decision came down, and he would tell me now what I already knew. He would say with his warm deep voice: "Poor friend, it is done!" I had gone to bed late because news had been coming in, from the Quai d'Orsay, from the newspaper offices where I had friends, from the embassy. I still had not turned on the light, although the telephone had been ringing constantly. One more minute of darkness, I thought, one more moment for the benign workings of ignorance, just a bit more darkness before all lights go out in Europe. It is not possible that life can so simply come to an end. How quiet it is outside! Why has humanity not taken to the streets to pit its mass against this bit of destiny? Does humanity want to go down silently without resisting? I imagined hearing the breathing of millions who were now sleeping, and I wanted to call to them: wake up! Then the telephone went silent. I took the receiver but everything was dead. No one spoke. The connection was gone. How wildly my heart beat, how I regretted having hesitated! For a moment I was tempted to call Roger in his office, but a kind of shame held me back. I did not want to let my worry show. No, I wanted to grant myself a longer respite. Paris was still sleeping, after all, and not a sound could be heard from the street below. The morning would arrive soon enough with its blazing September sun and its snuffed-out hope.
Then the telephone went at it again. This time I did not hesitate, grabbed the receiver right away. "Are you Roger?" But it was not Roger, it was a woman's voice. It took a long time till I recognized it. Nicole was speaking, asking who Roger was.

"That is neither here nor there, Nicole. I was expecting bad news from Germany and was prepared for the worst. You gave me a scare. What is the matter? Do you realize it is three in the morning?"

"Oh excuse me, my dear. I just got home. I was at the Polish embassy for dinner, and it ran late. Oh my dear, is it really so late? Three o'clock already - I had no idea. You know I cannot get to sleep. Here in the Ritz it is so dreadfully still. I am so afraid. You really must come over to give me some advice. Right away, now that you are awake! Please come over to see me right now so we can talk." Nicole was French, married to an American, and she had come to Paris on a summer visit and was staying in the Hotel Ritz. Our acquaintance did not run very deep. I had seen her at various times at friends' houses, and one time when I met her by chance on the street we had taken a stroll together along the Seine. The chat stretched out a bit longer than I had reckoned, as this spoiled and somewhat too pointedly self-assured woman, whose hysterically snapping little dog would not leave me alone, began to speak about herself, her life. While we walked through the streets of the Ile St. Louis she suddenly stopped describing her shopping and parties and started telling me about life in America, about the strange
immature people there who did not understand women. She had been unable to find any friends there and had spent her time making expensive purchases, coats she found awful the following day, hats that she never wore, etc. Everybody in America ate fruit with a passion, but the fruit had a factory label on the polished peel. There were flowers, beautiful and in great quantity, but they were scentless - dreadful! - and by midnight everybody was drunk and talking about the prices of clothes and furnishings. One was driven to despair and could only wish for a speedy return to Paris. But her house was lovely, her husband's business was going grandly, and nothing could possibly happen to one - nothing good, nothing bad. In this way Nicole talked on, and her words fell one on top of the other, and from each word fear and boredom rose up. She had shown me a little of her inner life, but that did not seem like sufficient reason to call me at three in the morning and request that I come over immediately. I laughed, relieved that it was not Roger, just Nicole.

"Do I understand correctly? You are coming right away?" she repeated, "I hear that you are not angry with me. That is nice of you. Ever since our stroll on the Ile St. Louis I knew that we would be friends. My heart is so heavy, and I urgently need your advice. I'll call down to the night porter and tell him he should bring you right up to me. I also have a whisky for you, ice cold, standing right at my bedside, and salted almonds too. Now hurry up, or I'll fall asleep."
"That is the best thing that could happen to you at this hour, Nicole. Go to sleep. Don't drink any more whisky. Just turn out the light and lie on your side. It is late, and you must think of your complexion. What, you say you can't sleep? Then imagine you are living in the eighteenth century and riding in the mail coach from Nice to Paris. The first change of horses in Grasse, the second in Castellane, the third in Digne. Again and again new horses, new inns with new innkeepers at the door, new guest rooms, new landscapes and faces. You are not yet out of Provence and you have already fallen asleep. I swear to you, it is an infallible method. I will come to you tomorrow, let's say toward eleven o'clock, and then we can have a relaxed talk."

Nicole had calmed down. Her voice became tired and small. I spoke with her a little while longer and wished her good night.

On the next day the fate of the world still hung in the balance. There was so much to do that I almost forgot the appointment at the Hotel Ritz. But when I met with Roger in a bar in the Rue de Mont-Thabor to discuss the new developments of the day, I suddenly remembered the telephone call of the previous night.

"Imagine it! This morning at three my phone rang and I thought it was you calling to tell me that the negotiations at Bad Godesberg had fallen through. But thank God it was only a bored lady." Roger smiled thinly. He was tired and worried. "Women too have their problems," he opined, "their time is coming to an end. Believe me, I have never trusted
the so-called manly eras, and you must admit that ours is getting increasingly manly. Poor women! We have to be nice to them as long as we can."

Drawn Curtains

Shortly after eleven I knocked on Nicole's door. When I entered I at first could not make out anything clearly. The room was dark, but the voice directing me to a chair was Nicole's, and slowly I was able to distinguish her contours. As far as I could tell, she had a think layer of cream on her face and wore a band around her forehead, which gave her in this dim light the look of a nun. A thick aroma of perfume and Arden facials struggled against the smoke of a cigarette on an ashtray of her night table. On the rug was a cooler with bottles, and next to it a round vase with withered roses. Slowly my eyes got used to the darkness. I could see the objects and the form of a woman lying half propped up on her cushions, holding her head remarkably motionless, probably due to the cream, which gave a masklike aspect to the regular features of her face. Her hands were covered by a white liquid and shone like chalk as they lay on the bed, but between her hands something was glittering. She had her jewelry spread out before he. The small chest of crocodile leather, which she had to all appearances simply dumped out onto the bed, was lying on the rug, showing its moiré lining. With a stiff movement she drew her hand across the sparkling array of bracelets, rings, necklaces and brooches. Small cases of red leather were lying among these things, and she
cautiously drew up a giant string of pearls and let them plop down onto the heap of sapphires, diamond bracelets and platinum-set emeralds. It was like a regal mummy playing with the treasures she was to be interred among.

"So these are your concerns!" I called out. I was not even upset. I should have known what women of this sort worry about when the end of the world is near. "May I let in a little light?" I asked as I went toward the window.

"For God's sake, no!" she called out in shock, "anything but light. I look like a corpse. But what am I to do? I have an appointment today with René, and before that I wanted to see you. No, it does not concern the jewels, it concerns René, or rather, it concerns the war. I am really so afraid. Please tell me what I should do. My husband wired yesterday that I should come back to New York immediately. But I cannot abandon René. I love him! You cannot imagine how enchanting he is. He understands me so well, and I believe he would kill himself if I were to depart. Tell me, tell me if there is going to be a war, and whether I should leave Paris."

This confessional flood embarrassed me. I had no idea who René was and I did not want to know. Nicole was certainly not a bad woman. She was like most women of her kind who are left to their own devices and drag their boredom from Miami to Cannes, from Forte dei Marmi to St. Moritz and from Biarritz to Paris. Had it been her lot to become the wife of a bank official in a provincial city or the proprietor of a stationery shop, she would certainly have
remained loyal to her husband and in the evening she probably would have read better books than the Bromfield and Maugham she was reading now. She would have children and be happier about a gold chain than she was now about her jewels. At the end of things she would even have found pleasure in ageing; she would enjoy her fatigue and rejoice in her reclining chair. But Nicole belonged to another world. She had always had money and an obedient husband. She was childless; no birth had taken her figure away. She had never felt the urge to set up her own life. It was enough for her to do what the others were doing. Her friends, her reading habits, her recreation, her sensations and interests had been fixed from the beginning. She belonged in the Ritz and that is where she was lying now.

"How old are you really, Nicole?" I suddenly asked. She started at this question. Her hands let go of the jewelry. She shut her eyes and nearly held her breath.

"Well, how old are you?" I repeated cruelly. For I had suddenly grasped the real reason for her distress, and a kind of bitterness toward this laming, stupefying fear of ageing took control of me. I no longer believed that this woman feared the coming world catastrophe. I didn't believe either that she was afraid of America or that she was worried about René. No, the fear that gripped humanity at this moment emerged in her person as fear of growing old. She was plagued by the idea that her body could get heavy, her eyes dim, her face full of wrinkles. She would no longer be able to hold herself up among the other women of her circle. She
would no longer be attractive to men.

Oh no, Nicole was no worse than her peers, perhaps
indeed a bit better, and she did take care of herself.
Probably a little too much whisky, but no grand corruption,
certainly not. I was convinced that her flirt with this René
was still at the beginning stage and would not get any
farther. She wanted to please, she wanted people to turn
their glances in her direction when she sat in a restaurant
in her beautiful clothes, her fine hairdo, her delicate
cosmetic art. There was a staircase in the nightclub
"Monseigneur" that one had to descend to enter the
establishment, a wide staircase, brightly lit and with an
unimpeded view. To go down those stairs in a gown by
Balenciaga, very slowly, to pause short a bit on the middle
steps and savor with downcast eyes the universal attention -
for this bliss Nicole would have given over her immortal
soul. And now her soul was quivering fearfully at the heavy
harbingers of coming misfortune! What form it would take she
did not care, or dare, to imagine. She knew only that in the
heavens dark powers were gathering that would make no
allowances for good-looking women. Her fantasy was no help
to her in the imaging of future terrors, but she might have
sensed uneasily that the new era, knocking now with threats,
would force her to wake up one morning as an old woman,
without benefit of prettifying waters, without an hour of bed
lounging in shaded rooms before each step into the public
world, without the pliant assistance of the hairdresser - no,
delivered over to merciless nature, made to look exactly as
millions of peasant and working-class women her own age.

Nicole would, I am certain, not try to avoid the physical labor that necessity would demand. She would be equal to each daily task of existence. She was after all a French woman, and they seldom lack practical sense and solidity. But she was worried about her hands, her neck, which was certainly the most vulnerable part of her alluring body. Her mind conjured up the lugging of heavy packs and parcels, the smell of kitchens that would get stuck in her hair. She suffered, in short, at the thought that she would cease being someone special, someone extraordinary. Where others in their nightmares saw visions of destroyed cities, smoking cathedrals and maimed people, she saw only the fine network of lines around her eyes. Just don't grow old - that was her great anxiety.

I did not have to ask a third time for her age, though I was determined to, for she pointed to her passport lying on the night table and said softly: "Look for yourself." I paged around, saw French, Spanish, Italian and Swiss stamps, saw the photograph, which showed her the same yet very different - without atmosphere, without aura - and finally I saw that she was forty-six years old. For a fleeting moment I felt deep pity for this woman. Forty-six years, a splendid age! That is the height of human experience. The sting and the uneasy flickerings are past, and one now senses the capacity to think more of others, less of oneself. A kind of generosity takes hold which would have been unthinkable earlier; abilities and resources are known and one
understands how, while craving nothing, one may take in everything. The secret that transforms life's defeats into victories comes at this stage, but it is first necessary to accept inwardly - this for both men and women - the fact of chronological age. But Nicole did not stand as victor at life's apex - no, hers was an existence on the eve of collapse. She felt time go by, grain by grain, and the ground was swaying under her feet. She was still as it were rolling with the punches, but the proverb I once read on a sundial would apply to her: vulnerant omnes, ultima necat - all the hours wound, the last one kills. The more she tried to gather people around her and hold onto them, the more inexorably she felt an inner loneliness. For her these forty-six years were a catastrophe that grew more severe with each passing hour. She felt robbed, not enriched, and she regarded a return to America, and the future, with foreboding.

It was not at all easy to give her advice. Though she had called me in to hear my view of the international situation, she was in truth interested in other matters. She asked me if the Normandie was the last ship sailing for America, but what she really meant was whether her youth was now gone for good. In two hours she had a breakfast date with René in the shady garden of the George V, and she was hoping to see in his eyes a verification that she was an attractive woman. Her jewels of course could not remain in France, but should she leave Europe just on account of them? Should she return to the scentless and graceless world of
America just to safeguard her emerald pendant, her famous
diamond bracelet, her pearls and rubies?

How vain and trifling her predicaments were! And yet
this moment had a great importance for me. I was about the
same age as Nicole, but I had never given any serious thought
to the problem of ageing. I had done absolutely nothing to
prepare myself, inwardly or outwardly, for this great change
of life. But now I saw before me, girding herself up to face
and please a man for one hour, a woman who restlessly
clutched her jewels and looked on the great crisis vivid in
our skies as nothing more than the flight of her own years.
I thought of my age, and in an instant I understood perfectly
that I would be an old man when the last waters of the deluge
now precipitant on us had run their course. Yes, I would be
old, but the prospect did not frighten or shock me. It was
at this precise moment that I vowed always to face my age
squarely, to acknowledge it openly and accurately, and to
receive from it whatever grace, dignity and wisdom it might
offer. I remembered the comment of that hoary headed
gentleman standing next to me at the railing of the steamer
one night under the Southern Cross: "When you get old,
everything slips away, but God comes." I could not yet claim
this valuable certainty, but it would come my way as a
consolation, I now sensed. Beyond the misfortune that would
be our part in the coming years I was graced to discern a
silent well-being, an invulnerability and a precious
thankfulness in the darkening green of mature shadow. Later,
if I should survive the coming years, I would think back to
this strange noon, this opulent hotel suite in half darkness, this whitened figure in bed with the heap of jewels on the bedspread, and as the tired roses and the whiff of Moment Supreme wafted me mnemonically, I would rejoice that I had survived, and think with pleasure on Nicole and the conversation with her that opened a door in my life I had never noticed before. You too, Nicole, I understood then, inhabit a house in which but a few rooms are known. You have never ventured forth into the unoccupied rooms. It is time for you to feel your way forward in the dark, to thrust open the rickety shutters and take stock of the mustiness. Everything threatens you, danger is everywhere! The pain you do not yet know, and the pleasure that deems you now - both can kill you! Arm yourself, meet and know the pain and the pleasure intimately, and don't die!

The Shadows Grow Longer

"What should I do now?" Nicole took up the conversation again. "Should I leave, should I stay?" René would be very unhappy if I were to go. But if I stay something has to be done about my jewels. Or do you think I dare send them to New York? Well, can you come out and say if you think there is going to be war?"

"Yes, it is war. If not now, then in a few months. In fact I am certain it won't come for a few months, so you can let the Normandie depart without you, but what will you have gained by doing that? Sooner or later you will have to go back home and take up your life again. Maybe it will be a
different, more fulfilling life. What have you done for yourself other than look after your complexion and your figure? It is not enough to take a hot bath twice a day and pay the hotel bill on time. Am I right - you are the kind of woman who never forgets a birthday, at least your husband's? A few days in advance you call Mappin & Webb or Maquet and have a gift delivered. You are also punctual with your letters, in which you relate who invited you to which party. But have you ever considered...

At this moment the telephone rang. She picked up the receiver and spoke. Her voice became joyful and bright. "René!" she cried, how nice of you to call!" Then she heard him talk for a long minute. Though I could not see her features clearly, I sensed her enthusiasm gradually lessening. A few times she tried to interrupt his talk with small outbursts of protest, and then she said in a weak voice, "But René, that is not possible. What did I do to you? You can't simply get up and go. It's because of you that I am staying in Paris. This is simply not possible...."

But it was possible. René did not come to the appointment at the George V. He did not come at all. He took his leave forever. I gathered this much from Nicole's incoherent words after she had put down the receiver. René had other commitments, a trip to the Côte d'Azur, and he thought it proper to convey his good-bye to Nicole on the telephone. I did not know the man but I could see him clearly in my mind. He presumably wore a small black mustache and had neatly combed thick hair. I believe I
actually heard the sigh of relief with which he had hung up from his end. Certainly he had been very polite and of course very amiable. I was familiar with the high, self-satisfied voices of spoiled young Frenchmen who pay court to cultivated women over forty and get tired of the game so quickly. The women have such rigid daily schedules, are constantly going to the hairdresser, will not allow a man to touch or run his fingers through their hair, are always turning down the finest dinners at luxury restaurants and instead ordering toast and orange juice, are always shedding tears, disastrous though that is for their mascara. It was not difficult to imagine the relief of this young man as he packed his suitcases, putting in his swimsuit and remembering to include that smart new dressing gown - perhaps a gift from Nicole. I felt sorry for her. Certainly her feelings for this man did not go very deep, but she felt rejected. The blow did not damage her love; it damaged her sense of vitality. She knew she was no longer young, and now she knew it doubly. Perhaps the strength of a young man was necessary to face ageing without fear. Left to herself, her character did not have the resources to see the waning of life's curve other than as defeat. Can nothing, can no one help these women to go gray in peace, to accept the heaviness in the limbs and be thankful that passion can no longer whirl their lives around like leaves in a storm? I thought of the grotesque comedy of a famous Parisian actress who could have gathered her grandchildren around her in peace, but instead raced from one cosmetic operation to another to hold back the
flaccidity of skin and muscle. At the temples, along the hairline and behind the ears one could make out the fine white scars. She always held her head firmly upright, to tighten the neck and strengthen the chin. I had recently, to my own embarrassment, seen her up close at the home of friends of mine, bandaged and tightly girdled, her eyes painfully wide open, her hair altered to an indeterminate color and decorated with feathers and clasps, the mouth held permanently in a forced smile. It was hard for her to sit down and get up without shattering the laborious artistry of her appearance. How terrible this world must be not to allow her to sit by the fire at home and watch her grand-children, to be tired and gray. I was ashamed to be staring at her, but I could not pull my eyes away from her. The noble nose now looked huge, like the beak of some unfortunate bird hacking away against invisible bars. The once famous hands, or what one could make out of them under the rings and bracelets, were overrun by a network of thick, stringy veins. Did no one take pity on her? No indeed! She herself had taken up the fight, and now she stood in the center of the arena, but her opponent was not age, it was – death. The solitude of bed, the relaxation of unobserved sleep, whatever measures a far-reaching fantasy might wish for her would, at this stage, not help matters. No, for her there was only one remedy left, and that was death, that was the laying out on the bed, the final make-up, the wrapping of bands, the injections of paraffin, the masking tuberoses around the neck – and the soul at rest! It was not the first time that the
image of this actress came as a visitation upon me; it had obsessed me many times in the past. She did not want to grow old, to die. Fine, that was human. Or perhaps she wanted to but could not. Not to be allowed to die, to be pulled from the shadowy entrance to death's chamber, so near to serene, restful coolness, back onto the cruel stage of life, a Eurydice in reverse, clutching in vain the death she had pursued. And now she must return again to life! Oh yes, I know that I am making too much of this particular actress, that there were many other ladies in Paris who likewise could not make the decision to enjoy the honor and dignity of their age, and instead donned ostrich plumes and pranced about in variety shows or plunged, their wrinkles thickly powdered and hair luridly dyed, into the embrace of young men whom they showered with gifts. But the actress I had observed close up had become for me the symbol of a civilization that made women believe they could remain young forever. The attributes of this civilization, which in my own mind I called a civilization of the bra, vexed me to nausea. Fulfillment in love had died out, and into its place a pleasure knowing no age limit had stepped. Pleasure incites only to renewed pleasure. Pleasure knows no fulfillment. Eternal youth was the cunning deception that enticed women and held them breathless. On the beach, the newspaper photos indicated, each woman is beautiful, assuming she shows her flesh. The model of this civilization was always a beautiful young creature of eighteen or twenty years, her bra not a support but merely a covering....
Thus it was that growing old, at this moment as I sat at a near-stranger's bedside in the Hotel Ritz, appeared to me as a high grace, but a grace never bestowed in the worldly realm of pleasure. To grow old in peace, to receive the great satisfactions that accompany one's departure from lusting and being lusted after, henceforth not to have to simulate in doubt and jitteriness a thing for which one's energies are no longer sufficient; but also, more than a compensation, to experience the later blooming of other energies. This awareness would again come to the world after great suffering - or would it? Had humanity perhaps developed a capacity for survival, for compromise, for accommodation to catastrophe, to a truly degrading degree? There lay Nicole still flattened from the blow that René had landed her, but her hand, probably without her knowing, had begun again to play with the gems. Again she let the string of pearls swish and jangle against the little mountain of gold, platinum and stones, while the telephone rested quietly in its cradle - insidious weapon adept at hitting its mark and leaving no trace!

It had to be long past noon, and my time was up. I rose to say good-bye, but fear and panic took hold of Nicole: "You cannot go! You must not leave me alone! What is to become of me? I am so afraid. Please stay with me for just a little more time."

"No, Nicole, I really must be going. I have things to do, and really, what could I say to you? Depart from here, if not tomorrow, then next week. Go back home and take your
jewels along with you. You can easily arrange everything. You must understand, however, that there is but a short respite remaining for all of us. Try to survive the storm that is imminent. Your chances are excellent. But be clear on one point: When it is all over you will be old. Put an end to this agony and make yourself ready to exit this hellish circle of pleasure. Accept the gray hair, accept being less desired. It is good that the world abandons us before we abandon it. When you once accept your years, a plenitude will open before you, a time of peace and rich sentiments which today you can but faintly divine. If you do not take this step, well, then your remaining time will be measured out meanly, and you will go on living under the same fear that now holds you captive. For your own sake, renounce pleasure before it renounces you. I assure you, you will look superb in white hair and comfortable, roomy dresses. People will admire you, and all the younger women will envy you secretly the serenity and dignity of your demeanor. You will have so much time to think of matters you have neglected up to now. No one will abandon you. And nothing will be in a position to disappoint you.

I heard a strange childlike noise, and then I noticed that Nicole was weeping. The tears rolled down her cheeks, making little channels in the layers of cream. Alarmed, she tried to halt the downward flow with her hands, but the gesture only made the dissolution more rapid. The entire mask began to sag, to melt. The tears, having cut now a clear path, were flooding away the carefully presented
features and dripping onto the jewels. She reached for her 
handkerchief to stay the collapse, but the band around her 
forehead had come loose, and a sobbing convulsed her 
shoulders. She hid her face in her hands. Without 
constraint now she surrendered to her pain; it was a 
liberation. I had stepped to the window and was looking 
between the curtains toward the Place Vendôme, which lay like 
a great roofless festive hall in the midday sun. Every 
single foot of the square was taken up by parked cars, around 
which the restless traffic rotated like a cyclone. Opposite 
us was the building where Chopin had died, and next to it, at 
Schiaparelli's, the display window was being redone, two 
girls fixing a bouquet of autumn foliage and surrounding it 
with red and yellow fabrics. The tops of the columns were 
lost in the hazy sunlight. Nicole was still crying, but it 
was now a restful, almost pleasurable weeping that flowed 
softly from her eyes and found its way through the undone 
mask. I approached her to say good-bye. She laughed under 
the tears and whispered, "I must look dreadful! My God, what 
a state I'm in!" In truth nothing now remained of her cream 
façade. Her hair hung loosely around her inflamed brow. Her 
face looked old and tired, but also peaceful. Indeed, a 
peace that was new for her entered the fine lines around her 
eyes and filled the easing of her glance.

"I must look awful!" she repeated as she took my hand.

"You were never more beautiful than at this moment," I 
replied as in taking my leave I kissed her right hand, upon 
which remained a trace of the white cosmetic.
On this late August day I awoke at the first glimmer of dawn. The hesitating light that filled my room was still cold and hard. Outside the street was empty, more emphatically so, somehow, than usual, though one would think it enough simply to say that not a soul was on the street. I understood now that there can be a heightening of emptiness, that it is one thing if life and movement are absent from a street, quite another if the old life that just yesterday was strong is never going to return again. A quick shadow flitted by in the gutter, and I clearly saw that it was a rat. As I opened the window and clapped my hands it halted in its tracks and knew right away which direction the sound came from. It looked up at me, and I feared its gaze. I was the first human being ever looked at that way by a rat. The gaze was without expression, perhaps a little disapproving. "What do you want around here?" it seemed to ask, "Don't you see that everyone has left?"

Since I was completely alone in the apartment, the others having already departed the day before, I went through all the rooms to open the windows and let in the morning coolness. In the kitchen I lit up the gas. The piece of bread that I wanted to eat was dried out. Until the water boiled I walked around the rooms and asked myself what I would take along with me. Chirico's gray horses bucked
fearfully before an advancing sea. Bombois' picnickers were lying, munching their meal, in dusty grass next to a sluggishly flowing canal, a girl with ringlets waving a fish in her right hand. Picasso's lovers embraced, naked and inconsolable. Vivin's fishwives stood by their gingerbread houses at the harbor and loaded baskets with bilious green contents. The snow in Utrillo's church square was about to melt into dampness and gray mud. Taking these things was out of the question - what baggage could bear such figures, expanses and dreams? Why, indeed, pull one's gaze away from these colors, which the slowly beginning day revealed now by careful degrees. Maybe it would be possible to close all the window shutters, go back to sleep, and stay hidden that way until everything was all right again. The temptation was great. Such things do happen, and the months go by in total silence until the neighbors start knocking. The dust is then soft and gray on the furniture and books; in the bedroom kindly spiders have spun their nets, and it is not easy for the neighbors to make their way through. They fluff up the messy bed to find - lo! it is entirely filled with withered roses. Was I prepared for this most extreme measure and, if so, would fate once again allow herself to be cheated? I had learned a great deal in these years. I was often on the verge of changing my life utterly, turning over a new leaf, but my wishes for the next few hours were always the same and thus nothing changed and things kept their old course. The bees went on bringing their honey in, and bitterness fermented in time-honored jugs, awaiting the day that I would
develop a specially schooled thirst. The dialog with myself
today was at first but a murmur, since it did not seem apt to
raise my voice in the empty rooms. How easily an answer
could have come back to me, the sconces on the mantle saying:
"We gave our light, but you persisted in the blur!" and the
clock on the table remonstrating: "I measured out the hours
for you slowly and unmistakably, but you treated them as
though they were going to be countless!"

There had been a time when things stood in their proper
places, throwing small and unnoticed shadows. After all, who
pays attention to the shadow of an inkpot or a flower vase!
My clothes hung in the armoire, headless shapes that I was
wont to fill with brief life, the shoulders a bit
artificially puffed up with fake entrepreneurial gusto - and
the empty sleeves so very tired! Yes, the clean underwear lay
smelling fresh and brisk on the shelf, but expecting nothing,
the sleeves folded in quiet, too-obvious obedience to the
chest. The shoes alone, in their wooden trees, were held
back from any tell-tale laxity or profligacy. They glistened
like the wood of an old fiddle as they stood stiffly behind
the little curtain, shoes pre-ordained for petrification.
Did all these things still belong to me? I had great scruples
about making use of them again, and so it took a very long
time indeed before I got around to sorting my clothes.

When I stepped out of the house and saw the big square
in front of me, its empty hugeness overwhelmed me. How could
I ever cross that square? My gaze climbed high on the bare
outer walls of the domed church. The blackish dripping
visible everywhere on the stones had spread further. Through the small openings between the buildings I decried the distant height of Belleville, its white structures shining brightly amid heavy tree foliage in the summer haze slowly expanding over the entire city. At the two cafés below, on the corner of the boulevards, waiters were putting out tables. So they were still taking account of people, still expecting that customers would show up, just like in the old days. I knew him well, the man in the white apron who was wiping the marble table with a dirty damp rag. I had greeted him over many years on an almost daily basis, exchanging remarks about the weather and about crises in the government. He was a very old man who had known the poet Verlaine and had cleaned up that poet's obscene scribblings from the marble. His face looked tired and gray. At first I wanted to walk by him, but at the last moment I turned toward him. Our gazes met; he said nothing; I too kept silent. In melancholy, resigned agreement he nodded slowly for a time, then abruptly plunged back into the café.

By now many people were underway. Cars were rolling over the dark blue pavement, and the voices and sounds were loud, as before. Nevertheless I had the feeling of emptiness. There was more air and more distance between people than usual. The atmosphere today seemed rarified, shot through with fissures and jumpiness - nothing held in this space. The book store had already put its display outside. The books lay in long rows and the wind tugged timidly at the loose covers, but did not dare to open them
completely - it kept letting them close again. I stood there a long time, the sole customer, waiting for the wind to open a book and thus reveal my fortune! But soon there was no movement in the air at all, and I began to flip through, noticing the finger marks of the students who had been browsing or reading. I read one sentence: "One after another our friends take their shadow away from us, and into our sadness intrudes the secret distress of growing old." A second book by me was also lying there, but it had not been cut open, indeed it still had a band around it on which my name stood large in flaming red letters. I looked at the name a long time, as one might read an inscription in stone. No one had wanted to page through that book, and the wind had made its attempt in vain.

Endure

Ringing of bells in the air, flight of pigeons in the hazy brilliance of the ripening day. How had it been, really? Each walk down to the river was an all-promising campaign of the senses, thither, where the water flowed, where the voices of a never-ageing life rose up, down there to the familiar things that were new each day, as divinity rising from the flood in early hours, as a lordly gesture of destiny's arm commanding "Thither!" As if unconscious I walked to this urgent signaling, but I no longer knew where it was leading me. Down, down, following the tilt of the road, awaiting the calls from the deep, which never came. Thus I moved onward just before noon on the last day.
There it lay before me, the river. Bridge after bridge crossed it, but its flow toward the west was inexorable. Its water bore the secret reflection of all the faces that had leaned over the railings, almost all of them disconsolate faces - the optimist looks straight ahead. Faces of lovers too weak to face parting. Faces of the discouraged who hoped to lose themselves in the surging flow of memory. And now I stood on the bridge and I did not dare to look into the water. A little coolness came up from below and weakly held its own in the growing heat of the day. The smoke of a barge veiled me and dissipated. Flow on, flow on, cherished river! I thought. I will never cheer up, unless you take all my remembrances with you and erase what must be erased. Only the water is free, no one can change its form.

The path along the riverbank was long. To the north stood the dark earnest flank of the Louvre, and the gracious columned house of the Institute lay delicate and expectant, as though a frightful decision had been taken to vacate the scene as soon as possible. On the trees of the Tuileries there was a slight breath of the first autumn coloring. Slowly I crossed the bridge. Everything was quiet under the small trees, the playing children noiseless, a young miss on the bench had let her book sink and laid her hand over her eyes. The wooden horses on the playground stood stiffly. A black horse looked sideways at me from circular white eyes. The noon hour was just ending, and on the opposite street people were pushing forward, wordless and in haste. One or another among them would step out of the crush and
look up for a long moment at the sky. Around me there was a zone of abandonment, as if I had suddenly become invisible. I stopped in front of the Cézanne monument and looked at Maillol's naked woman. Her eyes were blinder than ever. Her entire life seemed to have fled into the powerful tension of her propped up leg. I gently put my hand on her shoulder and whispered: "Do you hear me?" But I knew that she no longer wanted to hear me. I knew that she had pulled back once and for all into the protective stone that she was made of. Enough of suffering, enough of the painful willingness to listen to human complaint. She had her peace. "I have come to say good-bye," I thought, but I didn't say it, because I knew she would not be allowed to answer me. "I have come to go. Today is the last day. Farewell, and endure!"

It is Time

Once more the riverbank, once more the bridges. Through the open gate of the Quai d'Orsay cars were driving in and out. The shiny black automobiles stood at the great staircase, but there was nobody in sight. I slowly crossed the gravel-strewn courtyard and entered one of the wings. I made my way toward familiar doors, and then walked right past them. Sacks and boxes were blocking the hallways. I heard voices and went up a staircase I knew well. Then I went the length of the corridor and again faced a staircase. I crossed the courtyard a second time, stepped completely outside the grounds, saw the domes of the Invalides, saw the trees of the Champs Elysées, where the foliage was already...
tired, and then I rested on the terrace of a café on the Place de l'Alma, and realized that this wandering around was senseless. I could no longer keep pace with the flow of life that filled this city. Guiltless blindness allowed these people to go on, to proceed along the streets, to disappear into the buildings. They were all living. I alone knew. I wished for sleep, sensed a great urging to enter into the dream that was tangibly close and pressing in on me sweetly. None of it is true! A little while, and you will see me no longer. And another little while, and you will see me again. Yes! it was just a matter of closing one's eyes a short time, and afterwards everything would be as before. I was so tired that the noise of the cars and the buzzing of voices numbed me as a lullaby. The dream was already in place. I had often dreamt it in the preceding years: fears, terrible fears, but when I awake everything as before. I knew though that this was the last day, "and into our sadness intrudes the secret distress of growing old."

"It is time," I heard a waiter say to a customer. "It is time," was the earnest message of the wind awakening at night to touch the treetops softly. "It is time," I said to myself and went home. The rooms were already filled with shadows, but I could have made things out if I had taken the trouble to look carefully. It was difficult to think of necessity. Slowly I picked out a few things, a few clothes, and left the house. There was still a bit of light on the roofs and a late brilliance on the clouds. The car made its way along the Boulevard of Sebastopol, which was flooded with
dust and a golden haze. The huge square before the East Station was full of people, of men and women who stood embittered, silent, captive. No crying out, no voices, just an immeasurable grumbling and whining. A sea of distress surged against the walls of the human heart, walls that threatened to cave in, but held. The train whistle stood out as the call of the seagull to this speechless flood.

At the North Station it was almost dark. People were flitting like shadows through the giant lobby. Mobile guards in black steel helmets, the short carbine hung over their shoulders, were occupying the platforms. I blindly entered my sleeping compartment and bolted the door. It was a pretty compartment with walls of bright wood with an inset floral pattern. I lay down fully dressed on the bed and soon fell asleep. Now and then I woke up when the train made a stop. The sounds were a dark flurry of voices, calls, and the impact of jackboots. I had no dreams at all, except that once I saw my name before me as a stone inscription.

Astringent sunlight, now at morning, pushed along the borders of the roll curtain into the little room, which was no longer vibrating to the noise of the journey. We were in Amsterdam, where at the time there was still no war.
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