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The Species Man as Defined by the Twentieth-Century French Author Vercors

Lorna Heim Carter

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THE SPECIES MAN AS DEFINED BY
THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH AUTHOR VERCORS

by

LORNA HEIM CARTER

A THESIS

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Department of Romance Languages

Under the Supervision of Professor H. S. Gochberg

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Preface

Jean Marcel Bruller (Vercors) was born in 1902 in Paris, and did not publish a literary work until 1942. Until that time he had worked for and received a degree in the physical sciences, a degree which he scarcely wanted but which he earned to satisfy his family. Drawing was his favorite mode of expression during the 1920's and 1930's, and between 1926 and 1938 eight Albums of his drawings were published. The titles of the Albums included 21 Recettes pratiques de Mort violent (1926), Un homme coupé en tranches (1929), and Visions rassurantes de la Guerre (1936); the drawings reflected attitudes of anti-militarism and anxiety about the future of man on the part of Bruller. He commented some years later on his rebellious attitude toward the necessity of conflict among men: "Pour qui connaît les dessins que, sous mon nom de naissance, je publiais avant la guerre, il est patent que mes efforts se résumaient à peindre, sous toutes ses formes, cette vaste absurdité, cette agitation sans espoir." ¹

With the beginning of World War II, Bruller, who had been in the later 1930's a minor officer in an engineering corps, did not join the regular army but instead participated actively in the Resistance. "L'armistice me trouva au pied du Vercors, ⁽²⁾ et coupa court à mon projet

¹ Vercors (pseudonym of Jean Bruller), Les Yeux et la Lumière, Paris, 1950, p. 16.

² A limestone plateau in southeastern France, department of la Drôme. Mountains of the region rise to 1800 meters altitude. The plateau is well forested but also known for its pasturage; the limestone is honeycombed with niches and passages.

d'en gagner les hauteurs avec mes hommes pour y défendre notre liberté. De là vint que plus tard j'en empruntai le nom pour défendre la liberté de notre esprit." ³

In 1942 the clandestine press Editions de Minuit published the first work of the author Vercors, Le Silence de la Mer. It was acclaimed as a masterful expression of the anti-militarist feelings of the French and of the Resistance, as well as a poignant comment on the loss of rapport between people who found themselves on opposite sides during a war.

During and after the war Vercors wrote other works, both in the form of fiction and in the form of essays. Those which appeared soon after Le Silence de la Mer continued in an anti-militaristic attitude, but those appearing in the late 1940's, in the 1950's and in the 1960's reflected a broader outlook on the part of their author: he extended his commentaries on the horrors of war to the problems of the world and of man.

Vercors has not claimed to belong to the mainstream of literary thought that developed toward the mid-twentieth century; he has characterized himself as a "lone wolf," "écrivain de circonstance, jouissant d'une renommée de circonstance . . ." ⁴ Moreover, he has made a clear distinction between his personality as a writer and as a man: "J'avais bien prévu que le pauvre Bruller, qui n'aimait que dessiner et graver,

³ Vercors, Portrait d'une Amitié et d'autres morts mémorables, Paris, 1954, p. 79.

⁴ Vercors, P.P.C., Paris, 1957, p. 17.

vivre dans la nature, vaguer çà et là en rêvant, . . . jouir de la vie simple avec quelques amis choisis pour leur fidélité, allait plus ou moins s'effacer dans l'ombre d'un écrivain trop brusquement célèbre, mangé à toutes les sauces de la vie publique." ⁵ Although the renown that Vercors has received has been principally for the superb first work, he has expressed the desire that he not be forever known as "Vercors-qui-brossa-l'écrit-sublime-le-silence-de-la-mer." ⁶

By the time he expressed this desire, Vercors evidently thought that he had written other things worthy of recognition, that the philosophies that he had come to express were quite possibly more important than the poignancy of Le Silence de la Mer. Certainly the number of his writings which have appeared since 1942 coupled with this desire expressed in P.P.C. justify some sort of inquiry after the aspects of his work which he has considered important. The results of such an inquiry form the substance of this paper.

The following is a list of the works of Vercors, with the dates of first publication.

Le Silence de la Mer	(1942)
La Marche à l'Etoile	(1943)
Le Sable du Temps	(1945)
Portrait d'une Amitié	(1945)

⁵ P.P.C., p. 19.

⁶ P.P.C., p. 18.

Les Armes de la Nuit	(1946)
Les Yeux et la Lumière	(1948)
Plus ou moins Homme	(1949)
La Puissance du Jour	(1951)
Les Animaux dénaturés	(1952)
Les Pas dans le Sable	(1954)
Les Divagations d'un Français en Chine	(1956)
Colères	(1956)
P.P.C.	(1957)
Sur ce Rivage	
vol. I: Le Périple	(1958)
vol. II: Monsieur Prousthe	(1958)
vol. III; La liberté de décembre; Clémentine	(1960)

The writer wishes to thank Professor H. S. Gochberg for his never-failing attitude of patience and encouragement during the direction of this thesis, and Professor Reino Virtanen for bringing Vercors to the attention of the writer as an interesting subject for research.

Chapter One

VERCORS IN FICTION AND ESSAY, 1942-1964

Vercors first published a literary work in 1942 during the German Occupation. It was entitled Le Silence de la Mer, and is perhaps the work for which Vercors was best known, at least until the appearance of Les Animaux dénaturés in 1952. This first work told the story of a German officer and of the Frenchman and his niece with whom he was quartered. From the first moment of the officer's stay, the hosts were discreet, polite, and markedly silent; the officer, in turn, was immediately presented as a man of feelings and culture: "'Je suis désolé. . . . J'eusse évité si cela était possible,'" ⁷ he said as he hesitated on the threshold of a home in which he was obviously to be an unpleasantly unfamiliar element. However, the officer quickly responded to the beauty and comfort of the household, and enjoyed the conversation, however one-sided, of each evening. His language was fine, delicate, precise: "'L'hiver en France est une douce saison. . . Ici les arbres sont fins. La neige dessus c'est une dentelle. Chez moi on pense à un taureau, trapu et puissant, qui a besoin de sa force pour vivre. Ici c'est l'esprit, la pensée subtile et poétique.'" (p. 26) This German was not a career soldier but a composer, an artist who could sincerely see good in what was to come out of the war.

⁷ Vercors, Le Silence de la Mer, Paris, 1944, p. 16.

"Pardonnez-moi: peut-être j'ai pu vous blesser. Mais ce que je disais, je le pense avec un très bon coeur: je le pense par amour pour la France. Il sortira de très grandes choses pour l'Allemagne et pour la France.'"

(p. 30-31) Beauty (France) would come to love and transform the Beast (Germany), and the offspring of this love would be of a glorious nature, according to the officer. He was content with the results, if not with the procedures. ". . . je sais bien que mes amis et notre Führer ont les plus grandes et les plus nobles idées. Mais je sais aussi qu'ils arracheraient aux moustiques les pattes l'une après l'autre. C'est cela qui arrive aux Allemands toujours quand ils sont très seuls . . .

Heureusement maintenant ils ne sont plus seuls: ils sont en France. La France les guérira. Et je vais vous le dire: ils le savent.'"

(p. 53-54) Thus a leave in Paris became for the officer a welcome chance to see some comrades who would help to "arrange the marriage" of the two countries. Upon his return, the officer avoided sharing the beauty and warmth of a household which he had obviously come to love. Finally he confessed to his still-silent audience that according to his fellow officers in Paris the marriage was not to take place in the expected manner. He had heard: "Nous ne sommes pas des fous ni des niais: nous avons l'occasion de détruire la France, elle le sera. Pas seulement sa puissance: son âme aussi. Son âme surtout. Son âme est le plus grand danger. C'est notre travail en ce moment: ne vous y trompez pas, mon cher! Nous la pourrions par nos sourires et nos ménagements. Nous en ferons une chienne rampante.'" (p. 77) The anguished officer then told his listeners of his request for transfer to the front, which had been granted; he left the next morning without another word.

La Marche à l'Etoile (1943) enlarged the theme of a man's belief in a shining goal, his quest of it in the strength of his belief, and his sudden and shocking disillusionment. Thomas Muritz, the son of a family in Bohemia on the Danube, had even as a small child developed a taste for everything French and dreamed of seeing France for himself. He could not bear the thought of living in Bohemia forever "quand là-bas--pas si loin--existait un pays d'hommes libres, une France radieuse, généreuse, intelligente, et juste!"⁸ At 16, in 1882, Thomas left for France without a thought for his personal future other than a certainty that he would find the country of his dreams. The first Frenchman he encountered, a red-headed aubergiste, did not disillusion him: "'... je crois que tu as bien fait de venir, parce que, la Justice, ça m'a tout l'air d'être l'affaire justement de ce pays-ci. M'est avis que la Justice, son soldat, c'est la France. C'est nous ses soldats. Il n'y en aura jamais assez. Si tu es venu ici pour en être un, tu es le bienvenu.'" (p. 37-38) This redhead became for Thomas the symbol of the welcome, the sense of honor, the bonne volonté that he expected to find among French people. Fortified by this welcome, Thomas reached Paris, contacted a family friend, and after some years of work was able to found his own Editions Muritz. He had a clear and definite purpose: to provide the masses of people with reasonably-priced editions of the works of his beloved French authors.

⁸ Vercors, La Marche à l'Etoile, Paris, 1945, p. 23.

This task completed, he set about to know the Paris which the writers he loved had given him. The intensity of his feeling for the city is made evident by Vercors: ". . . pas une rue, pas un pavé qui ne le vit passer quelque jour. Révait-il, durant cette lente et amoureuse possession, d'imprimer sur cette chair aimée la marque de son passage? . . . Ce fut toujours un amour sourcilleux et excessif." (p. 49)

In 1914 the war came as a great shock to Muritz, but even when he lost his son in that war it did not shake his love for France, or for its ambassadeurs, his good luck pieces the red-headed people, who seemed more than once to lead him into good action. When World War II began, Muritz wore the Star of David even though he was only half Jewish because to behave as a true Frenchman ". . . il faut faire le don de soi de façon ou d'autre." (p. 74)

The narrator learned later that Muritz was picked up by French gendarmes in a group of fifty required by the Germans, and there found his last redhead among his guards. "il s'est approché, et lui a donné deux tapes amicales derrière l'épaule. Si vous l'aviez vu sauter! . . . Une seconde après, Muritz avait son revolver dans les côtes. Pauvre Pandore! Quelle panique!... "Au mur! Au mur" criait-il." (p. 90) Muritz suddenly faced a Frenchman, and even worse a red-headed Frenchman, whom he knew to be not a man of justice and good will but one of greed, fear, and mistrust in face of what should have been the common enemy of all Frenchmen. And in this sudden disillusionment "il s'est mis à se frapper les tempes de ses poings, avec désespoir, et à pleurer...avec des sanglots..." (p. 91). Thus he died at the hands of men whose country and fellows he had so long loved.

A group of essays published in 1947 under the title Le Sable du Temps clearly reflects Vercors' attitudes toward the war. The first essay, "Souffrance de mon Pays," originally appeared in Life magazine on 6 November 1944. It outlined for America the steps taken by the Germans toward the deliberate degradation of the French people during the Occupation. It was not so much the lack of creature comfort which caused France to despair but rather the shame of hearing pro-German propaganda blared forth in the name of the supposedly docile French populace, the injustice of the death of so many innocent people, and the lack of any possible recourse in the face of the cruelty and scorn demonstrated by the Occupation soldiers. Vercors described towns ravaged, burned, massacred by the Germans, twice following these grisly accounts with an almost sing-song phrase: "Le lendemain, le Maréchal, chef de l'Etat, s'en va saluer les victimes d'un bombardement américain ("...anglais") . . . Et nous ne pouvons rien faire . . . " ⁹ It is clear from this essay as from La Marche à l'Etoile that not all Vercors' scorn and distaste was directed toward Germans but also toward Frenchmen who applauded atrocities or were silent bystanders.

The second essay of Le Sable du Temps, "Le Nord," dated 1943, searched for a definition of worthwhile action during the trying days of the Occupation: "Il y avait pourtant une voie qui semblait claire, celle de la fidélité: To thine ownself be true...mais laquelle?" (p. 49) Vercors finally adopted the "grande loi de Kant: 'Traite

⁹ Vercors, Le Sable du Temps, Paris, 1947, p. 39, 41.

toujours l'humanité, dans ta personne comme dans celle d'autrui, comme une fin et jamais comme un moyen'" (p. 63). He felt that it could be proven statistically that higher societies followed this rule and that societies evolved toward this condition; thus it was not only desirable but inevitable, and thus the German order could not have been the one into which the world would move. This Law Vercors declared to be "Le Nord."

Following these two essays appeared the group of essays properly called Le Sabla du Temps. The first, dated 1944, briefly explored the means by which persons gain self-respect, and continued with a cry from the narrator against the enemy who has caused him to lose his self-respect by causing his love of all men to change into hate of certain men. The second essay (1944) recalled the desperate actions of the Resistance workers who despite danger shared a happiness of common effort that they believed worthwhile; they never doubted that their enemy's cause was unjust and even inhuman.

The third essay (1944) expressed the desire that those who wanted to hurt humanity could feel for themselves the pain they inflict on others; if this could happen, Vercors thought, torture would in fact disappear.

The date of the essay "L'Oubli," 1944, leaves a painful impression on the mind of the reader; before the war's end Vercors recognized men's forgetfulness of the injustice, shame, and sense of weakness that had tortured the France of the Occupation. Travelers on a train have all forgotten the torture of several deportees which occurred at a station along the way; they talked now of nothing but their own

petty affairs. Vercors also expressed his fear of the reascendancy of those who encouraged the torturers; the good citizens that these men feared have done nothing to discourage their activities.

In a bitter essay dated 1945, called "L'Art et l'Imposture," Vercors criticized certain people of so-called artistic temperament: a concert performer was accused of a crime of conspiracy, and called for at the hall by several young gendarmes. The audience found this charge of so little consequence that they began to chant in rowdy chorus, "Au-front! Au-front!" By what right could these callous persons blithely consign others to the front while they remained safely at home?

An essay on Pardon (1944) minced no words in saying that pardon of one's self or of others' wrongs to self is always difficult, while it is easy to forgive others: "Tellement facile d'appeler pardon ce qui est oubli." (p. 137) Vercors doubted seriously that the living could in honesty forgive the murderers of so many innocents, when this could only be done by the murdered, who had suffered the injury.

In one of the last essays, "Responsabilité d'un Ecrivain," Vercors discussed the justice of punishing an author for collaboration in writing, while industrialists who had collaborated ran no such risk. He decided that the writer's offense, because of his capability to persuade others, was more grave.

In "L'Enthousiasme" he expressed the hope that the enthusiasm of France, so spontaneously demonstrated at sight of DeGaulle in 1945, might never again be played upon and dissipated by ruthless men who, in order to use the country for personal gain, might change the people "en petit

bourgeois méfiant, soucieux de son ventre et de ses poches." (p. 177)

The final essay, dated 1945, was appropriately titled "La Gangrène" and presented Vercors' disillusionment with a committee established to censure publishers who had collaborated: the committee's recommendations had affected no one. Vercors accused the country of immorality: collaborators (public and private citizens) were going unpunished while honorable participants in or victims of the war found their homes and positions usurped and had no recourse. Vercors warned of the effect of such behavior on young people and through them on France's future, and his final sentence resounds like an Old Testament prophecy: "Car le sol d'une nation où fleurit l'immoralité n'est pas de granit, mais de sable." (p. 190)

The short novel Les Armes de la Nuit (1946) was written following the return of deportees from German prison camps. The hero, Pierre Cange, was nearly unrecognizable upon his return: emaciated, nearly toothless, and devoid of his old confidence and resolution. As the former leader of an underground group, he had undergone severe torture; he said it wasn't really names and information that the Germans wanted, but "'c'était faire de nous des loques: . . . Un être dégradé à ses propres yeux n'est qu'une loque. La mort vaut cent fois mieux!"¹⁰ Pierre had returned, but he avoided everyone, even the girl whose love for him had never wavered. When her brother accused Pierre of being a Hamlet incapable of action at a time when France needed him, he fled.

¹⁰ Vercors, Les Armes de la Nuit et la Puissance du Jour, Paris, 1951, p. 24-25.

When he was found, ill, in a fisherman's hut, the narrator learned the truth of his experience at the concentration camp: "'J'ai perdu ma qualité d'homme.'" (p. 69) Against cold, famine, disease and torture one could build barriers: "'je m'étais forgé un bréviaire: une avocation, une litanie des hommes que j'admire . . . chaque épreuve j'avais cru en sortir vainqueur.'" (p. 71, 75) Now, however, Pierre compared the camp to a slaughterhouse for the weak and a bull-ring for the strong who were led out to be taunted, prodded, and broken in spirit: "' soudain [la bête] se retrouve vidée, rompue, pesante masse torpide sans volonté, sans ressort... elle est la chose, le jouet du torero... Comment, à quel moment cela s'est-il produit? A quel moment a-t-elle perdu le contrôle de ses muscles et de son instinct? . . . Quand a-t-elle cessé d'être taureau pour se muer en boeuf?'" (p. 72-73)

Pierre was ordered to put a load of corpses into one of the furnaces always blazing at the prison camp. The first one he lifted was still warm, the man opened his eyes and Pierre to his horror recognized him as an old comrade. He hesitated; the S.S. in charge immediately prodded him toward the pyre, and Pierre threw his comrade into the flames. He had felt himself from that moment a dead rag, a mechanical object.

The narrator stumbled from the hut... "Comme Hamlet, j'avais d'un spectre écouté le récit du crime le plus noir qui se puisse concevoir: l'assassinat d'une âme." (p. 86) Vercors added, "Oui, je l'abandonne. Que faire d'autre? . . . La nature du crime commis contre lui, le monde jamais n'en a connu de pareille. Comment secourir la victime?" (p. 89)

Les Yeux et la Lumière (first published in 1948) included several short stories by Vercors which had according to their author one and the same hero: "l'homme pur, l'homme en soi . . . cet 'animal éthique' qui diffère de tout le reste de la création parce qu'il tente de mener une vie dirigée par sa volonté." ¹¹

A young Italian sculptor, believing that life and love were more important than vague "posterity," decided to destroy a statue of his wife, worth four years' labor, because she had fallen ill and believed that the statue was draining away her life for its own.

A member of a rebel faction in Portugal, Gaspar, was summoned before the leader of a fraternal faction and instructed to denounce his own leader without question before a council of members. Gaspar agreed as a loyal member of the brotherhood. At the council he noticed all the other loyal members who trusted their leaders, and he realized that the leader who had summoned him cared not for the League but for his own position, and that he would mislead the brotherhood to advance himself. Gaspar fought a battle with himself: "'Je n'ai jamais menti qu'à nos ennemis! . . . Mais tromper ces bons frères, tous ces braves bougres! C'est trop facile, c'en est ignoble et lâche.'" (p. 92) He could not bring himself to help this unscrupulous man and thus was himself quickly condemned by the relentless leader.

A farmer and family man, Arnaud, agreed to ambush^{and} delay a German convoy during a Resistance arms movement. Waiting in the hills with his machine gun, Arnaud wondered why he was staying: he hated war, he

¹¹ Vercors, Les Yeux et la Lumière, Paris, 1950, p. 8.

didn't know the men he had agreed to help. Why should he die for them? Although he decided several times to leave, he accomplished his ambush, was wounded, beaten, and thrown into a truck, where despite physical anguish he found himself happy from having fulfilled a trust.

A poet named Luc abstained from dealings with the nearby town and with World War II, although he did momentarily shelter a parachutist. Suddenly Germans invaded, massacred, and burned the town. Their commander did not direct the action but installed himself on Luc's hill and, while the hidden poet watched, painted a beautiful and serene landscape. The officer, like Luc, was trying to maintain an inner purity, and he was able to forestall contemplation of devastation he vaguely regretted but which his orders had wrought. Luc, horrified, realized that this avoidance of responsibility was not too far removed from his own lack of involvement with what should have been his friends. He re-entered the smouldering town and searched for recognizable bodies to bury; he began a new poem, one of involvement and of real anguish, instead of the former cool exercises in complex abstracts.

Two Frenchmen, Bruno and Isabelle, were attempting to flee a cholera-stricken country; to do so Bruno planned to kill and rob a rich Dutchman, who, all unknowing, had contacted the two Europeans to help him out of the country. Bruno agreed, then drugged him, lugged him to the river and prepared to push him over the parapet. Caught and fascinated by the pulse beat at the man's neck, Bruno suddenly realized that the man was turning over as if comfortably in bed, and would

roll off the edge. Seemingly moved by this human activity devoid of conscious ulterior motive, he pulled the Dutchman from the edge and returned home with him.

In the last story, set apart as an epilogue, Gracch, poet and philosopher who had tried to kill the dictator Othon, was now his prisoner. Othon had himself been a disciple of Gracch, but had abandoned the philosopher when he showed the dictator's unhesitating "duperie" of the people he didn't love.

This story differs from the foregoing ones: Gracch was confused neither in his attitudes nor in his behavior toward man. As a philosopher, he had devoted his time to solving this problem which had tortured the other heroes. He forced Othon to admit: "si, à tes yeux de Nature, la vie des hommes est sans valeur, la mienne ne vaut pas plus; si la mienne est précieuse à tes yeux d'homme, celle d'un million d'hommes vaut un monde." (p. 238) Thus Gracch's sacrifice of himself, in the attempt to kill a man who considered men as a means and not an end, was not necessarily worthless. He had understood why the other heroes could not betray their fellows: it would have meant using men's minds and bodies as stepping stones for their own profit.

In 1950 there appeared a book of essays called Plus ou moins Homme in which Vercors attempted to define which human actions add to the worth of man and which debase that worth. He discussed in an opening section, "La Sédition humaine," what he believed to be some attributes characteristic of man and man alone, including some sort of spirit of inquiry and refusal of ignorance. Love and friendship, art and concepts of beauty, Vercors said, manifest man's need for

communication and his attempts to appropriate bits of nature for his enjoyment during his exile from nature.

A large section titled "Corollaires" discussed morality and action. One essay on "La fin et les moyens" recalled "Le Nord" of Le Sable du Temps: to say that the end justifies the means without setting limits on the means discovers the possibility of infamous acts' becoming praiseworthy. Vercors felt that there existed certain "constantes morales irréductibles" ¹² which could not be abandoned lest society undergo grave dangers. He devoted considerable space to a discussion of lying as a violation of one "moral constant," and set up a hierarchy of lies: lying to an enemy is less serious than lying to a simple adversary, which in turn is far less serious than lying to one's friends or to the people. One must always remember the basic infamy of lies, or else "la plus noble cause peut, un beau jour, se réveiller dans les plis horribles de la sauvagerie ou de l'esclavage." (p. 152)

A heading called "Admonitions" included words directed at the Americans in 1945, warning that peace would not result from one country's possession of atomic bombs nor from all countries' possession of them, because the country with the most fear would begin the nuclear war which no one would win. "Il faut que l'horreur de la mort d'autrui surpasse la peur de la nôtre." (p. 219) He told German youth uncertain of their future to look for truth inside

¹² Vercors, Plus ou moins Homme, Paris, 1950, p. 105. Hereafter referred to in text notes as PMH.

their own minds, and warned that men lost their human quality when they abandoned the fight for the common good to concentrate on personal gain.

The section "Problèmes Esthétiques" reaffirmed the rebellious nature of man, and repeated that "le langage, la pensée, l'art, la religion, la politique sont les conséquences de cette rébellion." (p. 282) In the last section Vercors testified: "Tout acte engrosse l'avenir . . . Mais le vrai péché, c'est le découragement. Persévérer n'est diabolique que dans l'erreur, et la seule erreur impardonnable c'est d'accepter qu'on traite des hommes en moyens, comme des bêtes ou des choses." (p. 331)

The essays in Portrait d'une Amitié et d'autres morts mémorables were written in 1944, 1945 and 1953. Portrait d'une Amitié presented Vercors' friendship with Gen. Diégo Brosset, who was Jean Bruller's superior at a military camp before World War II. To Bruller (Vercors) Brosset belonged to "cette catégorie de gens qui acceptent la vie telle qu'elle est, s'y installent et s'en arrangent sans peine parce qu'ils n'en ont pas même aperçu l'amère absurdité." ¹³ After Munich the friendship changed, because Bruller was not able to accept injustices in the way that Brosset could as a "part of life." Bruller argued that the deaths he foresaw should furnish a motive for shaken calm, but Brosset responded that no one should refuse to die to prevent injustice. Brosset died in action at the head of his division, never

¹³ Vercors, Portrait d'une amitié, et d'autres morts mémorables, Paris, 1954, p. 57.

having wavered in this belief.

The next mort mémorable was that of Jean Prévost le fort; Jean Prévost was a writer of tremendous vigor, optimism and insight. "Il me dit un jour: 'Notre civilisation, nous sommes trop dedans. Nous n'avons d'elle qu'une vue trompeuse. Ainsi un homme se trompe sur sa voix, sur sa démarche; il lui faut le disque, le film, pour se connaître enfin 'de l'extérieur.''" (p. 104-105) With the advent of war Prévost became a maquisard; after a prolonged period of secret fighting against the Germans Prévost and his men were caught, seemingly as the result of betrayal, and shot.

The final essay included in the 1954 volume was Abolir les Mystères. This essay paid homage to Paul Eluard, who had helped to establish the image of the poet as a reflector of life and if need be of the ugliness of men as well as a bringer of beauty and virtue to life. Eluard had written poetry about poets and young people who had behaved nobly in the face of danger and death. He wanted poets to be involved with the lives and fortunes of other men; a poet could not live in a vacuum, but only with other men. About a poem which expressed a death wish in the face of so much suffering among men, he told Vercors: "'C'est le poème de ceux qui ne savent pas que vivre c'est aimer; le poème de ceux qui ne voient dans leur miroir qu'une image solitaire, au lieu d'y voir celle des hommes tous ensemble.'" (p. 132-133)

In La Puissance du Jour (1951) Nicole, the girl who had loved Pierre Cange in Les Armes de la Nuit, masterminded the disappearance of an infamous collaborator from la Vendée named Broussard, and had Pierre contacted to direct the discussion of his fate. The narrator

went to the town where the prefect Broussard had disappeared, and the doctor at whose asylum Broussard was being detained enlightened him on the necessity of persuading Pierre that Broussard would have been picked up even if Pierre and his problem had not existed.

Back in Paris, the narrator encountered Pierre. He had not changed, and did not want to change to the point of forgetting. The world, he said, had run a great risk and hadn't realized it: " . . . ce n'est pas une menace simplement politique, ou sociale, religieuse ou que vous voudrez, il ne s'agit pas de liberté, de justice, de foi, de droit des gens, de démocratie ou de quoi que ce soit de semblable, il s'agit, cria-t-il, de l'espèce!"¹⁴ Others would try as the Germans had to make other men their "inferiors." The prisoners like Pierre tried to stay alive so that the world might understand the attempt of the torturers, but seemed to have failed. Pierre returned with the narrator to la Vendée and reluctantly appeared before the assembled former underground members. One member, Manéon, heard Pierre's tragic story and his question "'Sur quoi dois-je me juger? Sur ce que le reste de ma vie m'avait fait croire, ou sur cette ignominie?'" (p. 138); Manéon then told his own story of consigning a dying man as a hostage to the S.S. instead of the strong and active one of their group to which the lot had originally fallen. He continued: "'Des gestes comme ça ne sont pas nôtres. Nous n'étions qu'un outil . . . Cela ne doit que fortifier notre résolution dans le combat.

¹⁴ Vercors, La Puissance du Jour, Paris, 1951, p. 73. Hereafter referred to in text notes as La Puissance.

Direz-vous que nos camarades médecins, qui désignaient pour la chambre à gaz leurs plus grands malades afin de sauver les moins atteints, direz-vous qu'ils ont mal agi?" (p. 140)

Pierre visited Broussard and learned that he had delivered men to death and the Gestapo because these were the orders of the "pouvoir légitime" of the time. Pierre responded that delivering Frenchmen to Germans who had no thought for the good of the country was simply "un marchandage. Justifier les assassinats au nom de la seule légitimité n'est qu'un tour de passe-passe." (p. 148) Broussard clung vigorously to the idea that France's most vital possession is a strong "cohésion intérieure," which is caused by adherence to the power in force and not by rebellious action, such as that of the Resistance of World War II.

Altman, a bookseller, could not vote for the death of Broussard because of a view that the man should be welcomed back into the "Corps Mystique [de Jésus]" with the conclusion of peace. After hearing Broussard's conversation with Pierre, he decided that as an incurable cancer in this "mystic body" Broussard should be eradicated, but was not yet ready to vote that way.

The narrator received a visit from Pierre late one night and learned that he had allowed Broussard to escape. Rather than explain, Cange recounted his excitement and horror at witnessing a brain operation. Brain matter, he said, was "'Enorme, indifférent, rangé comme une armée, et... comment dire?... intrinsèque. . . . Et pourtant, entre ça et nous, ça et ce que nous sommes, il y a une crevasse plus large que tout le saint-frusquin du bon Dieu.'" (p. 174) No one can ever

know more than a small fraction of the workings within the body, Pierre had realized, and with this realization he affirmed himself as still a man. The next day he returned to la Vendée and admitted to the others that he had purposely been careless about Broussard on the night of a fire in the asylum. Nicole later explained to him the anger and disappointment of the others at the thoughtless release of Broussard: so many other collaborators were escaping punishment, so many innocent victims of the war pushed aside, and the shame of Franco "dont depuis plus d'un an on annonce la punition, que l'on menace du doigt et du sourcil..." (p. 235) Pierre came to life at that; he wanted to go to Spain "parce qu'il s'y trouve des hommes à sauver. Que pourrais-je faire de ma vie, sinon sauver des hommes?" (p. 237) Where the men who want to crush and debase men will go, there those who want to lift and aid them must go also. And there Nicole and Pierre went, until Pierre was injured running arms, became ill with pleurisy and tuberculosis, and returned to a French sanitarium. Now he explained to the narrator the truth he had unearthed at the brain operation: "En gros, l'honneur, êtes-vous d'accord que ça consiste à ne pas trahir son camp?" (p. 255) —but betray to whom or to what? He realized the answer when he saw the brain appear: to anything outside of man or anything that lowers man's worth. So that he no longer felt a traitor to man from his act because "il n'est que deux façons de trahir, c'est de passer à l'ennemi, ou d'abandonner le combat." (p. 256) Thus the narrator could believe Pierre cured; but why had he let Broussard escape? —because although he had recognized Broussard for a man who had attempted to debase humanity his thoughts had not yet been clear enough to make him realize that Broussard would never change, that he was one of a

breed diametrically opposed to Pierre's kind. After leaving the sanitarium, Pierre continued to be much more interested in what he could do to save men from Broussard's kind than in finding the one among the many.

The novel Les Animaux dénaturés (1952) departed from the style of the previous works based on attitudes toward war; here Vercors approached more directly the problem of man and his self-definition. He concocted a rather fantastic plot: a group of anthropologists and paleontologists accompanied by a British journalist named Templemore stumbled onto a new group of men or apes in New Guinea. No one except the journalist and one paleontologist (who was also a priest) worried about the nature of the friendly little beasts, until two events occurred. First, the Papuan bearers ate several of the "tropis" (as they were called, from a contraction of "anthropus" and "pithecus"); second, a businessman of Sydney announced his intention to use all the tropis for very cheap labor in Australian textile mills. A double problem resulted: if the tropis were people, this plan amounted to slavery; if they were apes, then English textile mills would suffer. Over the protests of the priest the scientists decided to attempt to cross a female tropi and a man, on the theory that true species do not interbreed. Crosses were attempted also with chimpanzee, gorilla and orang-utan. Unfortunately all the attempts succeeded. Amid these disturbing events appeared an article by an anthropologist named Drexler stating that if the tropis belonged to the human species, then why should not similar apes? Thus, said he, there would result simply a family of hominids, with a hierarchy: the white man appeared necessarily on top, the negroid necessarily below. Templemore, the male human involved

in the experiment, returned to England with a female tropi, who bore a small male infant of disturbingly confusing aspect. Templemore had it baptized and registered as his son, then killed it.

A trial followed, of world-wide interest: had Templemore killed an adorable little animal to save it from the businessman in Sydney? He had in any case killed a being who was both physically and legally his son, no matter what its further status. Templemore feared that the jury would avoid the real issue - that of deciding if this little dead individual were man or animal and thus that of deciding the status of the whole group. To do this, however, the jury would need to use a definition of man himself. During the trial, in spite of the attempts of several anthropologists to define man (for example on the form of the astragalus ¹⁵), to define him by his language (which in turn was not defined), the jury could not reach a verdict. It was necessary to establish a committee of British citizens under the auspices of Parliament to settle the issue.

The judge of the first trial had come to wonder if any man could exist without fetishes, taboos and the like. Finally he made known to the committee the outcome of his thoughts: man interrogates nature and does not submit to it. "—Or, pour interroger, il faut être deux: celui qui interroge, celui qu'on interroge. Confondu avec la nature,

¹⁵ A proximal tarsal bone in higher vertebrates, in man called the talus. One of the anthropologists in Les Animaux dénaturés mentioned that its shape determined whether or not an animal had upright posture: if the bone were short and thick, posture was upright; if long and thin, it was not.

l'animal ne peut l'interroger. . . . L'animal fait un avec la nature. L'homme fait deux. . . . Des animaux dé-naturés, voilà ce que nous sommes." ¹⁶ This idea was welcomed, but in order to include it in a committee report acceptable to all this questioning of nature became "l'esprit religieux": "Art. I. -- L'homme se distingue de l'animal par son esprit religieux" (p. 226) including "la foi en Dieu, la Science, l'Art et toutes leurs manifestations; les religions ou philosophies diverses, et toutes leurs manifestations; le fétichisme, les totems et tabous, la magie, la sorcellerie et toutes leurs manifestations; le cannibalisme rituel et ses manifestations." (p. 226-227)

Did the tropis possess any traits such as this? The members of the expedition recalled that the bearers never ate the tropis who were content as captives in the camp, only those they could catch on the cliffs. The cliff tropis had the custom of smoking their meat - not in order to preserve it, but seemingly simply as a custom. It seemed to the committee that the cliff tropis had demonstrated a primitive adoration of fire and thus could be considered as humans. The retrial of Templemore was short: the defense declared that to convict the accused would be to apply a law retroactively, since no one knew the status of the tropis at the time of the murder. Templemore won an

¹⁶ Vercors, Les Animaux dénaturés, Paris, 1952, p. 221. Hereafter referred to in text notes as Les Animaux.

acquittal; the tropis now could be educated and welcomed into the human "club." 17

In the novel Colères (1957) Vercors explored the mysterious physical interior of man through a doctor-poet Egmont, and at the same time presented groups of individuals concerned together with solving problems of humanity. 18

Egmont had watched a mortally-ill scientist friend remain on his feet working the night of his death in defiant refusal to accept death, which he called murder. He had heard a friend describe a novel about an island concentration camp, whose inmates were killed to make room for the yearly newcomers - they characterized the newcomers as extensions of their own lives. He had viewed the chicken heart which his friend Mirambeau had caused to beat for five years by nourishing it on "pure, young" plasma: Mirambeau theorized that a signal to slow cell activity caused aging and death just as signals or stimuli of a fetus caused tissue cells to proliferate into different organs. Egmont saw the young girl Pascale torturing herself between loving him

17 In 1964 Vercors published a play, Zoo: ou l'assassin philanthrope, with the same subject as Les Animaux dénaturés. His opinions had not changed; this time the jury of the retrial were able to accept the term "rebellion" as a necessary criterion in the definition of man, and Templemore again won an acquittal.

18 Les Divagations d'un Français en Chine, published in 1956, was Vercors' next publication after Les Animaux dénaturés. It was an account of his 1953 trip to China to represent France in a Conference on Peace. This book revealed in large measure his delight at the beautiful cities (especially Peking), at the amelioration of conditions even in the smallest towns, and at the wisdom and strength of China herself.

because of his closeness to death, and loving a robust young worker, Pélion. After Egmont burned his feet in a fire at his home and gangrene developed, he adopted (first only momentarily) a retreat from reality, a trance-state which he realized to be a retreat inside his own body. Hoping to establish rapport of mind and body and to learn about man from the inside out, he retreated more and more into this state. He cured his gangrene, was able to raise or lower bruises, and little by little rejuvenated his body. But he was unable to bring back concrete information about where he had actually journeyed or what he had seen, other than vague notions of mangrove swamps and flotsam-choked rivers; and he found that re-entry into reality became increasingly more difficult. He did not want, moreover, to rejoin humanity and its petty problems, when what he was doing and learning (even if only momentarily learned) was so much more important in the search for man.

Meanwhile Pélion had organized a strike against the discriminatory wage offers of a plant's management. He had lured old Mirambeau from his laboratory to help raise popular support. Even the "North Af's" who were brought in to operate the locked-out plant joined with Pélion. Later Pélion suffered a near-fatal beating at the hands of police who wanted him out of the way to weaken the strike. Mirambeau, by now fully dedicated to the cause, roused so much indignation against this cruelty that he received strong hints of concession from the préfet de police on behalf of the management of the locked-out plant.

Pascale, who loved both the middle-aged Egmont and young Pélion, had fled in confusion but returned at the news of Pélion's injury. She visited Egmont, now in a constant state of stupor, and she found

that she could not condone his withdrawal from the world. However, neither could she accept that anyone should die or realize that he must. Her father convinced her that it is worse, although much easier, to run from pain than to try to help and to realize the worth of men's lives. Life's meaning comes, he said, from the fact that some men's actions advance humanity.

Egmont, before lapsing into a state of complete divorce from reality, had brought up one idea: " . . . notre chair ne vit pas. . . . Un homme, un chien, un escargot vit. Mais un morceau de chair, non. Une cellule vivante, . . . c'est seulement . . . une choréographie . . . les ballerines existent, elles existent en chair et en os, mais le ballet? En revanche, la chorégraphie demeure, quand bien même chaque danseuse serait remplacée par une autre. Le ballet n'existe pas mais il reste immuable, tandis que les danseuses existent mais elles passent et changent."¹⁹ Egmont's former wife, the one witness to the experiment, enlisted the aid of a neurologist, and Egmont finally responded to the shock treatments they administered. His scorn for humanity had disappeared after the long and frightening sojourn away from it. He referred to his existence inside the body as "cette liberté trop vaste et pire qu'une prison." (p. 348)

Realizing that he had found it necessary to fear in order to understand what he found inside his body, Egmont gladly decided to remain among men. His self-revelation occurred at the same time that, in Pélion's hospital room, a celebration took place on behalf of the

¹⁹ Vercors, Colères, Paris, 1956, p. 286-287.

strikers who, because of their continued communal effort, had won a universal pay raise.

In P.P.C. Vercors signaled the beginning of his retreat from a world in which he could no longer be sure of being useful. He still was convinced that morality must exist in politics, but the communists, protesting this question as abstract and meaningless, refused to define immorality farther than to say that it consisted of things that "abaisse l'homme." ²⁰ Vercors feared that the communists would and could either advocate or scorn morality in politics as it served their purposes to do. He defended his role as a critic, a writer-intellectual on the side-lines of the actual political and social movement; the communists countered that unless he participated actively his comments would be false and lost in abstracts. Vercors strongly opposed what he saw as deliberate lying to one's comrades, which view the communists dismissed as another consequence of his being on the side-lines and not seeing clearly. Vercors warned that if lying to members and friends of the Party continued "un jour cette confiance s'éveillera dans le doute et l'incrédulité." (p. 43)

Vercors criticized the Comité National des Ecrivains for a lack of effort to establish means of understanding and communication between communist and non-communist writers and intellectuals. The Comité also lacked the courage to criticize the Revolution, Vercors

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Vercors, P.P.C., ou le concours de Blois, Paris, 1957, p. 29. The title is expanded in some sources as Pour Prendre Congé.

said. He suggested that the members of the Comité should take the risk of being criticized: that there are some risks "infiniment nobles qu'on accepte pour la plus grande gloire de l'homme." (p. 54)

After the Hungarian incident in 1956 Vercors attempted to avert a break between the intellectual groups of France and Russia. He pleaded, without much success, for peaceful fruitful coexistence. The Soviets, however, thought he blamed them for any breaks with France and that he believed them weak and in need of the intellectual exchange he proposed, and rebuffed him.

Vercors devoted one section of P.P.C. to the failure of a 1956 meeting of eastern and western writers of la Société Européenne de Culture. There had resulted no common ground of agreement, and Vercors' plea for a basic definition of man and culture had gone unheeded. This problem, he noted, he had confronted in Les Animaux dénaturés: without understanding the nature of man, how could groups understand cultural differences and avoid racism?

The remaining pages presented essays, letters and notes on the author's hate of war and his desire that one not forget its horrors and its basic disregard for human life, which he considered precious.

Sur ce Rivage, published in three volumes, contained three récits and one souvenir. In volume I, Le Périphe (1958), the narrator, a Frenchman who had suffered torture at the hands of other Frenchmen in Algeria, mused:

Etrangement, je ne conservais pas d'une épreuve où le mal semblait incurable, insensible à la 'douce raison', non, je n'en gardais pas d'accablement. Au contraire, je pensais: Eh bien, on retroussera ses manches. Je me disais que l'histoire paraît toujours engendrée par les violents, et que pourtant ce sont les faibles, les humbles justes qui ont, de siècle en siècle,

moulé l'humanité à leur image improbable: parce que les violents se combattent et s'annulent les uns les autres, tandis qu'en reprenant calmement, d'âge en âge, toujours le même sentier, les justes en creusent dans la terre la marque indélébile. 21

A childhood adversary of the narrator had become a violent opponent of his political views with adulthood. Their differences began to affect their friendship, and in 1934 the narrator decided not to see the man, Le Prêtre, again. The latter protested the decision, saying that friendships are not broken by opposing political views, even though Le Prêtre could and would beat the narrator senseless in a brawl over these views.

In World War II, Le Prêtre first supported Pétain, then joined the narrator in the Resistance; he was caught by the Germans, and sent to a prison camp, where he joined with the communists. After the war he remained communist until breaking with the party over its anti-clerical policies. He then married and went to Morocco.

The narrator, invited to Algiers to give speeches on nuclear physics, toured the city between lectures to a blasé audience. He visited even the most squalid sections, and was shocked to find that his sentiments about the poverty of the people were shared by no one among his hearers. Disillusioned, he returned to France. He went once again to Algeria some time later to search for a friend who had disappeared: she was a young French, Algerian-born, Jewish physicist. While hunting for her, he in turn was picked up, and once more encountered Le Prêtre, this time chief of the repression

21 Vercors, Sur ce Rivage, volume I, Le Périple, Paris, 1958, p. 10-11.

forces, who questioned the narrator on his reasons for being in the country and consigned him to the torture room.

In volume II of Sur ce Rivage, Monsieur Prousthe (1958), Vercors suggested that men had abandoned the idea that honor should enter into men's dealings with others. Thus one character felt no remorse at having bankrupted his relatives in a failing business venture, while a similar situation had caused his father's suicide years before. And so a gentleman and political figure, M. Prousthe, who had been attacked in the press and in court for his compulsive indiscretions with young girls, had absented himself from his daughters, his home, and his country for many years. From his return until his death he still continued to live the life of a recluse, and his daughters never knew of the reasons for his remoteness. A friend of M. Prousthe, after recounting the story to the narrator, added: "L'honneur, tu sais, dit-il, le sentiment aigu d'avoir perdu l'honneur . . . je me demande si c'est encore de notre siècle... si ce sentiment-là existe encore. . . . Aujourd'hui, je me demande s'il [M. Prousthe] ne ferait pas sourire. A en croire l'image que nous pouvons nous faire de nos contemporains, depuis quelques années... le sadisme et la torture portés à la hauteur d'une institution..." 22

The first part of volume III, La liberté de décembre (1960), portrayed a young scientist who met his favorite childhood friend Edwige on the beach one day and fell in love with her again. She would not give him her address, and could not make or keep very many rendezvous.

22 Vercors, Sur ce Rivage, volume II, Monsieur Prousthe, Paris, 1958, p. 129-130.

The narrator learned her address when, after a long period of separation, he received an invitation to her marriage to a partially-crippled architect. Several years later the narrator visited Edwige, her husband, her mother, stepfather and grandmother in Sicily and learned that the girl had been her stepfather's mistress since she was sixteen. Her grandmother, somewhat older than her stepfather, had wanted to maintain her own position as the man's mistress and to that end had married him to her daughter when Edwige was a child. When Edwige reached her teens the grandmother realized that the young girl provided another means to keep her lover near her. She thus both encouraged his desire for Edwige and removed the barriers which the innocent child attempted to keep between herself and her stepfather. After having learned the story from Edwige and her husband, the narrator attempted, as the husband had done, to wrest Edwige from the influence of her stepfather. She however cried, "'--Sais-tu que les damnés finissent par aimer l'enfer où l'on les a jetés? Ne peuvent plus se passer des flammes, des supplices? Peux-tu comprendre cela? Non, tu es encore trop sain de corps et d'esprit, encore trop pur, c'est pour cela que je t'ai aimé.'" 23

The narrator learned later that she and her mother died of asphyxiation in a gas-filled room while on vacation in Switzerland. The stepfather, a collector of art objects, had published a study of an archeological art find in Sicily. The sensationalism of his article made him almost instantly successful and several years later he was

23 Vercors, Sur ce Rivage, volume III, La liberté de décembre, suivi de Clémentine, Paris, 1960, p. 142.

elected to a cardinalship. "Il a prononcé du [feu] cardinal un éloge délicat, que l'on cite dans les livres d'école pour la finesse de sa pensée." (p. 176)

Clémentine concluded volume III; the narrator here was a former judge who had quit his bench because of the "neolithic" quality of the laws. The case which had decided him concerned the youngest daughter of a poor family, Clémentine Traubert. As a child she had had no place to sleep in the hovel that was her family's home except with an older brother. As a result of the love relationship which developed between the two, he sent for her from Marseilles after his military service. She became a prostitute; her brother was both her procurer and her favorite. When he died, Clémentine resumed the same occupation in Paris; while in an unexplainably despondent mood, she walked outdoors after curfew, and was arrested by the Germans. In a train to Germany and in the horror of a prison camp Clémentine found happiness in serving others; she found food and coverings when no one else could, she took beatings meant for others and she remained sane and healthy, thanks in part to the conditioning of her squalid childhood. With the war's end she was awarded a job helping to relocate deportees, but when her commission lost its headquarters, when jealousies arose over even her small salary, she found herself again without work. She applied for work through an office similar to her old one, but learned that factories weren't hiring deportees: "'Vous leur donnez mauvaise conscience, voyez-vous. A tous points de vue: d'abord votre passé leur rappelle le leur, et puis ils se font scrupule de vous employer à des taches inférieures - le qu'en-dira-t-on, vous comprenez. Alors,

ils préférèrent s'abstenir.'" ²⁴ Clémentine returned to prostitution, and one procurer who learned that she sheltered a young boy turned her in to the police. In the resulting melee she injured a policeman. At her trial, many old camp comrades testified to her worth as a person and to her life-saving influence. Despite this, Clémentine, completely beaten and demoralized, received a sentence. The former judge concluded: "'C'est moi que j'aurais voulu mettre en taule et non pas elle, moi et cette justice de brutes et toute cette société que j'étais censé protéger. Une société qui ne sait pas, ne peut pas, ne veut pas obtenir le meilleur d'un être comme Clémentine et la jette aux orties, est bonne à être jetée elle-même à la poubelle. . . . De me dire que Clémentine a été plus heureuse dans les camps de la mort que parmi nous, j'en ai froid dans le dos.'" (p. 250-251)

Albert Richwick, English gentleman and narrator of the novel Sylva (1961) had lost his parents in a hunting accident and did not himself hunt on his large manor. Thus, when a pack of hounds chased a beautiful fox toward his hedge he hoped it might get through and escape. When the hounds milled around confused, Richwick saw that the fox had disappeared; he pulled a nude girl from the hedge, and soon realized that she must have metamorphosed from the fox - she had the mind of one, as well as the demeanor, behavior, odor, and habits.

The book traced the efforts of Albert Richwick and the nurse he hired to change the habits of their charming Sylva into those of a human being. She quickly learned to use an imitative form of language

²⁴ Vercors, Sur ce Rivage, volume III, La liberté de décembre suivi de Clémentine, Paris, 1960, p. 232.

for demands, as some animals do. She escaped once but returned, and shed her first tears, seemingly at the memory of unpleasant experiences.

Albert's neighbor, Doctor Sullivan, was pessimistic at first; he felt that Sylva's mind was too set in its fox's ways to change; she would have to learn the fact of her own existence.

Sylva escaped again in the spring and was found in the hut of a brutish woodcutter. Richwick, trying to decide if he should leave her there, sought the company of the townspeople for consolation but instead was horrified by a seeming "*attente bestiale de quatre murs et de la nuit pour la libération charnelle d'une vaste fornication.*"²⁵ He returned home completely drunk, found Sylva returned, and in her arms experienced profound joy and new certainty of purpose. By the next morning he had resolved anew to lead Sylva into human society.

One night she recognized herself in a mirror, and in terror broke every mirror she could find. Richwick labeled her terror a realization that "*ainsi cette Sylva est une chose séparée de toutes les autres choses . . . que cette Sylva, c'est elle, et qu'ainsi elle existe irrémédiablement.*" (p. 173)

She learned to carry a good luck charm, a heavy rope which had cowed an overly-playful dog. She learned the meaning of death in a horrible moment of realization that the same dog, who had become her friend, would no longer be able to romp with her - and that some day Albert, Nanny, and even Sylva would suffer the same fate.

Albert learned that Dorothy, the daughter of Doctor Sullivan, was a drug addict who had after some months of abstinence again taken

²⁵ Vercors, Sylva, Paris, 1961, p. 139.

up inhalations. He tried to help her, managed to pour out her supply of drugs, and only succeeded in driving her to London for more. Now he found his sentiments torn between her and Sylva, "entre une bête dont je voulais faire une femme, et une femme qui voulait redevenir une bête. Le plus urgent, me dis-je, c'est évidemment de retenir la seconde." (p. 207) He went to London, took drugs with Dorothy in an effort to understand her difficulty in order to save her from it; he failed utterly, and after some time returned home.

Sylva's education began: she learned to count and to draw, and in seven of the last fifteen pages of the book, she learned to read, question, and reason. Then the nurse found that Sylva was pregnant. Richwick found himself in anguish: he loved Sylva, and wanted to be the father of the child, but it was much more likely that the father was the moronic woodcutter. Sylva had no idea of the father's identity; when she conceived, her mind was still that of a fox. Now, a human being, she could not bear the idea that Albert, an object of her feminine love but also a father figure, could have fathered her child; she fled to the town, where her baby was born: a fox.

In a discussion of Vercors' characters as such, several general types seem to appear. The German officer and Thomas Muritz in the two earliest works, Le Silence de la Mer and La Marche à l'Etoile, believed blindly in the inherent goodness of all men and also believed that men wished each other well. The officer was willing to accept means of which he personally disapproved in order to gain the shining goal he envisioned. Thomas Muritz could not even recognize that bad means were being employed; he could not and would not believe that a French Maréchal would bend to the will and desires of the German

occupation command. The shock of the disillusionment in both cases broke the men's spirits; in Muritz' case his black despair led him directly to his death, while the officer's resulting decision certainly increased the chances of his death. Both stories are poignant and personal; in this respect they can be compared to none of Vercors' following works until Sur ce Rivage.

Pierre Cange of Les Armes de la Nuit advanced the matter a step; he questioned his own worth and his right to call himself a human being, after having used a man as a means in the prison camp. His despair did not descend on him just before his death but instead promised to continue with him throughout a long and miserable life.

The heroes of Les Yeux et la Lumière clearly reflect the development of the ideas of Le Sable du Temps: the scorn for collaboration and the conviction that men should never be treated as means. All the heroes had at least shed the veil of idealism and blind faith in all men as good; and the last, the philosopher Gracch, restated the law "Le Nord" with certainty in opposing his role directly to that of the regent Othon. He was not willing that this tyrant should continue to treat his subjects as means, as stepping stones for his own ambition, and as objects of his personal derision. Gracch's behavior and his utter lack of hesitation in performing his duty paved the way for the reappearance of Pierre Cange among men in La Puissance du Jour, as did the further precision of worthwhile action for man in Plus ou moins Homme. Pierre could realize that he had never lost his spirit of inquiry and questioning into the worth of his acts, that he had never in any sense condoned his act, and that he had never wavered in his desire to help men to better themselves. Thus he had never betrayed his own kind, which, it is worthwhile to note, was not the same as the

"kind" represented by Broussard. Broussard was able to disregard "Le Nord" in perfect tranquillity, by his adherence to the idea of the "pouvoir légitime."

In Portrait d'une Amitié, whose essays carried a range of dates both before and after that of La Puissance du Jour, the heroes were real men who devoted their lives to a deliberate ignorance of life's apparent absurdity, who believed in man as being worth caring about, even if they should die in their whole-hearted devotion to showing men their problems and thereby opening a way to their resolution. They had not, at least in these accounts, had to question the validity of their cause; they were simply men helping other men, and thus direct and otherwise unheralded personifications of Vercors' law, "Le Nord."

With the publication of La Puissance du Jour in 1951, Vercors made it infinitely plain that he had realized the opposing roles of Cange and Broussard. This separation of roles he had deliberately hinted at in Les Yeux et la Lumière in presenting men who could not take advantage of their comrades, as, Gaspar as opposed to the unscrupulous leader and Gracch as opposed to Othon. Bruno too was the same type of man; he could not push the Dutchman off the parapet, not even if doing so would have assured his escape from the country. The same separation of roles appeared philosophically in Plus ou moins Homme, but in La Puissance du Jour it was codified not for small groups of individuals but for all men, stated clearly and flatly by an active, convincing and believable hero.

After 1951 Vercors seems to have realized the worldwide application of his beliefs: in P.P.C. he mentioned over and over again the

lack of accord between groups of men: Les Animaux dénaturés and Zoo depicted the difficulty he envisioned and had seen realized even among learned men: that of finding any common ground for mutual understanding.

In Sur ce Rivage Vercors presented more examples of men like Pierre Cange (the narrators of Le Périple and La liberté de décembre) in opposition to men like Broussard (Le Prêtre, the stepfather Granval). On a more universal basis, he presented society's lack of understanding, its callous attitude, and its forgetfulness of services rendered (Clémentine), and the loss of the sense of honor in men's dealings with each other (especially Monsieur Prousthe). The feelings of strong emotion in this four-part work link it in impact to the earliest two works. Vercors' didactic period seems to have been partially suspended here in favor of narration of tragic stories. These stories do not end with complete disillusionment, and they can be read for themselves alone in all their richness of scene and dialogue; but they will with afterthought also illustrate the ideas Vercors had developed between 1942 and 1958 on man's inhumanity to man. In Le Périple the tragedy caused the narrator not to despair but to resolve anew; in Monsieur Prousthe the narrator was not affected directly but learned of the disappearance of honor from among men. In La liberté de décembre and in Clémentine, again the narrator escaped the spiritual ruin which struck his friends, each time as the result of the action of an unscrupulous man. In each case the narrator benefited, he learned, and would be able to use his knowledge in the rest of his life.

It might be suggested that the novels of Vercors fall into two general groups: realistic ones which deal with observations of the

interrelations of man and Vercors' attitudes toward both man and these interrelations, and those novels in which he turns to fanciful means to explain and advance his theories. Les Animaux dénaturés, Sylva, and Zoo belong in the latter category, and in this writer's opinion do not succeed to the degree that the other works have.

Vercors said in the forward to Colères that Les Animaux dénaturés showed the difficulty of defining man on a morphological, zoological, physiological or psychological basis, and of defining him without racism. His experts in anthropology who testified included Professor Knaatsch, who based the species Man only on upright posture which freed the hand and the mind, and which posture found its basis in the shape of the astragalus. The difficulty in any analysis of such a character as Professor Knaatsch, who is the very essence of the ridiculously wild-eyed, absent-minded, disheveled, rude "scientist" of some old movies, stems from an uncertainty of the state of Vercors' anthropological knowledge. Does he seem to spoof morphological criteria here as a basis for defining man or is his criticism deadly serious? Has he studied all the attempts at morphological definition of man and other species and thus rejected them from his philosophical standpoint, or has he gained only superficial knowledge which he then rejected without deeper thought? There is evidence for the latter view in the portrayal of the priest-paleontologist and language expert called "Pop." Pop seems to be a character with whom one sympathizes and whom one believes. He made this statement: "S'il faut pour mériter ce nom [de langage] une grammaire et une syntaxe, bien des tribus primitives ne savent pas parler. Les Veddahs de Ceylon disposent à peine de cent ou deux cent mots, qu'ils se contentent de

débiter à la queue leu leu. Je dis qu'il y a langage dès que des sons articulés désignent des objets ou des faits, des sensations ou des sentiments qui varient avec la place et le choix des sons.'"

(Les Animaux, p. 65) This definition of language did little to clarify the definition of man: Captain Thropp, performer of many experiences with apes, testified at the trial of Templemore that chimpanzees had learned to obey orders "non accompagnés de geste," and that some others had learned to call only males "papa" and to call "cup" if in need of water. In Sylva the little metamorphosed fox learned rather quickly to speak in this way; in Les Animaux déaturés Captain^{Thropp} said that this type of language certainly partook of "abstractions."

The priest "Pop" appeared again in Zoo (1964), where he credited the Veddahs with still a very small vocabulary, up to 250 words, and also stated that they employed absolutely no syntax patterns. The Bushmen he similarly noted to have 500-600 words, the Zulus 7-8,000. There is no indication of where "Pop" (or Vercors) got this information, but as commentary one might note the following:

He who professes to declare on the strength of his observation that a native language consists of only a few hundred terms displays chiefly his ignorance. He has either not taken the trouble to exhaust the vocabulary or has not known how to do so. It is true that the traveler or the settler can usually converse with natives to the satisfaction of his own needs with a few hundred words. Even the missionary can do a great deal with this stock, if it is properly chosen. But it does not follow that because a civilized person has not learned more of a language, there is no more. . . . It may be safely estimated that every

existing language, no matter how backward its speakers are in their general civilization, possesses a vocabulary of at least 5000 to 10,000 words. ²⁶

Kroeber also states that the number of words recorded from Zulu is 17,000.

Another anthropologist in Les Animaux dénaturés, whom the text gave no reason to doubt, said that external and internal factors affected species: the external included "le climat, la nourriture, les autres animaux" (p. 39) and the internal "les forces de transformation issues d'une sorte de volonté de l'espèce, une volonté diffuse de se corriger peu à peu" (p. 39) — notes hardly designed to avert suspicions of anthropomorphic and Lamarckian tendencies on the part of this character if not on the part of Vercors. Even though this book is a novel, Vercors evidently designed it to convince its readers of the necessity for understanding each other and of the existence of difficulties in arriving at understanding. The presentation of erroneous "facts" in the discourse of supposedly eminent scientists does not so much point out the weaknesses of science as it weakens the desired message of Vercors: thus the means used by Vercors to strengthen and justify his philosophies can be attacked.

Questionable statements about certain tribes were not limited to these novels: in Plus ou moins Homme, attempting to prove the absolute necessity of "rebellion" in man, Vercors proposed:

Prenons donc l'homme à sa limite la plus primitive, celle où il se distingue à peine de l'anthropoïde. Le pygmée de nos jours peut encore nous en donner une image, puisque

²⁶ A. L. Kroeber, Anthropology: Culture Patterns and Processes, New York, 1963, p. 39.

dans presque tous les domaines, il est inférieur à certains animaux: moins éduicable que l'éléphant, moins adroit que le chimpanzé, moins ingénieux d'apparence que le castor constructeur de villages, de digues, de canaux et d'écluses. Ceci confirme bien que ce n'est pas dans ces divers domaines que l'homme se distingue essentiellement des animaux. Mais il est une chose que fait le pygmée et que nul animal ne fit jamais: il lance au ciel des imprécations. (p. 19)

The nature of his observations about the pygmy mars his conclusion on the essential attribute of man and thus casts doubt on its pertinence - for the pygmy, for example. If Vercors did not know of the ingenuity of the pygmy in his own surroundings, how could he be sure that the pygmy "rebelled"? And what, according to Vercors, could be the nature of this rebellion? The observer could go even farther here, taking Vercors' errors about certain tribes for a lack of concern for his readers' judgment about the tribes, and thus for a sign of racism! Finally, since Vercors not only criticized the role of science in Les Animaux dénaturés and Zoo but also allowed several discrepancies to enter the works, the novel Sylva, the only other work with this type of non-realistic flavor, may find itself colored with the same doubt as to any possible scientific accuracy of the metamorphosis of a fox mind to a human mind.

It would seem from the type of examples of cultures used that Vercors' ideas on "primitive" groups were based on journalized and popularized accounts: the Veddahs, Bushmen and pygmies are groups that might be expected to appear in such articles, as examples of groups having "primitive languages" and being "less educable than the elephant," and so on.

The novel Colères lies between the realistic and the fanciful. The accounts of the events leading up to the strike and of the meetings and conversations between men both in sympathy and in opposition are entirely believable. The anguished rebellion against death and the decision to attempt the experiment that led Egmont to withdraw from reality are likewise vivid and clear. Only the sojourn of Egmont inside his own body seems unreal; the neurologist who administered the shock treatments explained Egmont's cure of his gangrene and his stupor as a form of psychological hysteria, but could not exactly define this latter. He could not explain it. It is not too difficult to be convinced that this sort of psychological phenomenon seems more plausible than the sudden metamorphosis of a fox into a person.

Vercors has written mostly short novels under the heading of récit or nouvelle: these seem very effective for Vercors' purposes as they have allowed the people involved, especially their emotions and their fates, to be the most striking element of the works. The récit, as in Sur ce Rivage, allowed a narrator to march unnamed through each work, recounting his own and others' troubles but in each case shouldering his part of the burden and continuing his own struggle, as Vercors would have all to do. This short-story type of writing also allowed for a quick build-up of emotion and tense drama, signaling the inevitability of a clash between types of men, as in the two earliest works, in Les Yeux et la Lumière, and again in Sur ce Rivage. In the last two works mentioned the short climactic story style has permitted continuity of thought and philosophy, and corres-

pondingly of the reader's sympathies, from story to story. This continuity might have been lost had the style been longer, more embellished, or rambling.

That persons and their fates form a striking element in these stories is never better illustrated than in Clémentine. The reader knows from the beginning that Clémentine was imprisoned, and that the circumstances of her case caused a judge to quit his bench for a practice of law in the lower courts, where he hoped to be of greater help to people like her. Immediately, then, the reader begins to pick up details about Clémentine, to sift them through, wondering what her sordid childhood would contribute to the woman she would become, and finally what it would contribute to the prisoner sentenced from a French court. The reader cannot help sympathizing and even identifying with Clémentine as she learned to read in the German prison camp; the same reader cheers her superhuman efforts to help the weaker prisoners, and he turns pages as quickly as possible to learn what happened to her next. When he reaches the scene where she received her jail sentence he feels a sense of betrayal! and can say with the judge: "j'ai froid dans le dos." 27

Another point of style, noticeable for example in Colères, concerns Vercors' spreading out of the role of porte-parole among several characters. Pascale's father, an otherwise minor character, convinced her that life had meaning in that some men helped and cared for others.

27 Vercors, Sur ce Rivage, vol. III, p. 251.

In this he certainly followed Vercors' law, "Le Nord." Egmont practiced individual rebellion against ignorance, which was a good step but not so fruitful as the type of rebellion advocated by Pélion. The latter rebellion resulted in new means of communication among men, which communication Vercors always has desired.

One of the North Africans sent as "scabs" convinced his fellows of the necessity of joining the ranks that would help the most men. Egmont's notion that flesh "does not live" recalled Pierre Cange's revulsion at the sight of the unfriendly brain. Both suggestions seem related to Vercors' idea that man is separated from all else in Nature.

The old scientist Mirambeau found in himself the strength to address a strikers' meeting and to talk quietly with poverty-ridden workers on the same subject: that one didn't let one's mates down, and one didn't employ or condone vicious cruelty in actions - reminiscent of "Le Nord" and of Les Armes de la Nuit.

From the beginning, in choice of genre, in story and emotional content, Vercors has stressed the importance of people, he has stressed Man. In a letter dated 1954 and published in the dossier P.P.C., Vercors said to a surgeon who had written a book on the high value of human life: "ce que vous pensez de moi est vrai: l'homme est mon seul souci." (p. 332) And what are his reasons for writing? He said, again in P.P.C., "J'écris pour dénoncer les mensonges et les injustices. Et j'écris aussi pour essayer d'aider mes lecteurs à trouver le sens de leur vie." (p. 81) It seems to this writer that Vercors has undertaken to help man by defining him, by showing him what he can expect of himself and of others, and by showing man why men behave as they do. It is this definition of Man, and Vercors' progress

toward its clarification as well as the steps he has used to refine and present it, that will form the subject for the following chapter of this paper.

Chapter Two

VERCORS AND THE SPECIES "MAN"

The novel, La Puissance du Jour (1951) marks a strong point of climax in Vercors' work. In this, the most decisively written and the most powerful of all his novels, he stated what he considered to be a basic duality in the species Man. Pierre Cange, the hero who had long questioned his own right to call himself a man, regained his confidence at the end of the novel in recognizing that the species called Man was composed actually of men and of tigers. He saw the separation in all its stark clarity: "il est en effet tellement plus de tigres que d'hommes sur la terre . . . Pauvres tigres frileux pour la plupart, ni bons ni méchants pourvu qu'ils aient leur minimum de chair fraîche assurée chaque jour, braves tigres même, souvent, gentils et domestiqués, et qui se croient des hommes parce qu'ils ont appris à parler, à imiter servilement les gestes de la tribu...". (p. 260-261) Tigers are different from men, then, although there remains a superficial resemblance; but in what characteristics do they differ? The implication is not of a morphological difference but of a behavioral one. When Pierre compared the tiger's quest for game and the final leap onto the back of antelope to the behavior of the man-tiger, he included an ambiguity: that the man-tiger may be as unconscious of his crime against his fellow creature as the real tiger is, or he may be imbued with the deliberate cruelty and ferocity that are popularly associated with tigers. Pierre suggested this

ambiguity of role in his further division of the category of tigers:

Il y a les faméliques, les respectueux, les superbes. Est-il même juste d'appeler tigres les premiers - tous ces pauvres bougres qui n'attendent, pour devenir pleinement des hommes à leur tour, que d'en avoir le temps et les moyens, que d'être un peu moins 'aliénés' (comme disent les marxistes) par le froid, la faim, tous les besoins de leur encombrante carcasse?

Les vrais tigres, ce sont les respectueux, ceux à qui l'aisance économique permet la méditation, et qui n'ont jamais vu pourtant le vrai visage des hommes, et qui restent attachés à leur état de nature. Ceux-là se croient des hommes parce qu'ils ont délimité avec soin la terrain de chasse de chacun, organisé leur société de tigres avec des lois, des traditions, et, couronnant l'ensemble, un pouvoir légitime qui excuse tout et pardonne tout du moment que la chasse est bonne - et que la liberté de s'entre-dévorer quelque peu entre tigres reste dans des limites honnêtes et décentes. Ce sont les plus aveugles, puisqu'ils croient que toute sagesse humaine gît dans ces protocoles de notaires et de gendarmes. Et qu'ils se donnent volontiers l'alibi d'aimer les arts, les belles-lettres, et celui de la religion, sans d'ailleurs jamais se demander d'où viennent celle-ci ni ceux-là, quelle en est l'essence, l'origine... Et puis il y a ceux que j'appelle superbes, qui savent très bien qu'ils sont des tigres et qui s'en vantent, exécuteurs sadiques et fanatiques des hautes œuvres de ce Grand Tigre qui les ignore d'un mépris cosmique, et que pour cela même, au lieu de le combattre, ils adorent dans une admiration femelle. Ceux-là, nous ne les convaincrons jamais. Ils n'auront jamais des hommes que leur apparence trompeuse. (p. 274-275)

Pierre gave the "Grand Tigre" title to "toute cette viande planétaire . . . mon poumon, la cervelle de Varèse, la côtelette que je mangerai ce soir, le grouillement dans la jungle, la mêlée des bêtes dans la mer, toute cette gelée vivante qui se perpétue sans cesse aveuglement, qui se dévore, se digère, se recrache, se refait..." (p. 276). Pierre decided that man, the true man, never accepted simply to live as "live meat," unthinking, uncaring in his dealings with other men, but instead that he honored others' rights, that he did not use his fellows as a means.

The factors which helped Pierre to reach these decisions about himself and the human species were varied. Nicole's plan to bring him out of hiding would not have by itself succeeded in reaffirming Pierre's faith in himself. He had wanted to "redevenir une bête, une chose, un morceau de nature. Pêcher comme le tigre chasse." (p. 66) But he could not find a border to cross in order to become this uncaring being: during the time of this very quest for oblivion he had rushed without hesitating into a storm to help save a ship in distress. He began to realize after that incident that he could never become this "chose," but could neither explain nor in any sense condone the commission of the one seemingly inhuman act. Thus his despair continued.

A priest who had overheard Pierre telling the narrator of his despair also contributed to Pierre's cure by labelling him and his fellow prisoners as "le Christ": they had taken the sins of the world on their shoulders and had tried to stay alive in the camps in order to serve as a living example of the inhumanity of some men toward others, but the world did not realize their sacrifice. The priest added, "'Mais le jour où les peuples auront compris QUI vous étiez, ils mordront la terre de chagrin et de remords, ils l'arroseront de leurs larmes, et ils vous élèveront des temples.'" (p. 78) After this confirmation and justification of his purpose, Pierre was able to face the other former Resistance members at St. L***, where he learned that he was not alone in bitterly regretting a wartime action. After his talk with Broussard he was firmly convinced that the difference between their views was insurmountable and that "il fallait que Broussard ou nous eussions raison, sa prudence rentable ou notre vaine révolte, avec leurs conséquences, et quelles qu'elles fussent"

(p. 167). To judge the "right" of the matter, however, he had to know what motives caused the sacrifices by men like him of their friends during the war: "si nous étions justifiés seulement par le succès, nous ne serions justifiés de rien: car ce serait admettre du même coup qu'un succès inverse eût justifié Broussard au lieu de nous." (p. 162-163) In other words, again, the end didn't necessarily justify the means.

After having witnessed the brain operation, Pierre was able to see another uncrossable gulf: one between man (that is, his thoughts, emotions, hopes and dreams) and his physical body. Thoughts, having origin in the brain, can neither consciously regulate nor explain the functions even of this brain, to say nothing of the spread of a mortal disease through the body. Pierre questioned which part of himself was then actually himself - and concluded that the only possible part could be his consciousness of being and of questioning. Thus the gulf between what is really "man" and all the rest of Nature's creation was unveiled to him. This led to his definition of "Le Grand Tigre" - including Nature and even man's own body of whom man knew so little, with the resulting necessity that men recognize their aloneness and band together.

Further, the gulf between "man" and the other creatures who resembled him suddenly widened: Broussard, who could easily sacrifice the lives of friends, of family, or of a whole town to a "pouvoir légitime" was, to Pierre, simply a different type of creature, and the differences were great enough in Pierre's mind to constitute species separation. Pierre at the end of the book realized the situation of Broussard the tiger, having also obviously justified the position of

his own kind: "Il a sa chance, je la lui ai donnée, mais il ne pourra pas la saisir. Il ne peut pas. Il est marqué: il est de ceux qui livrent." (p. 236) And Pierre was of the kind who brought hope and deliverance to victims of tigers like Broussard.

It is clear that Vercors had this idea of separation of species long before the character Pierre realized and presented it: the narrator (known as B*** [for Bruller?]), when he saw Broussard imprisoned at the asylum in St. L*** commented, "Un homme y marchait de long en large. . . . Pas une seconde il ne jeta les yeux sur moi. Je revis le lion méprisant du zoo d'Anvers, allongé dans sa cage étroite, qui ne cessa pendant la demi-heure où je le contemplai de fixer le mur derrière moi, sans daigner m'accorder un regard, comme s'il n'y eût devant lui que le vide." (p. 55) Images were carefully chosen here: the proud, uncaring aspect of the big cat; the idea of the scornful lion, of the disdainful lion who dreamed of ruling wide spaces through a "pouvoir légitime" of his own, even while locked in a cage. This paragraph springs out of the page when the novel is reread, and the reader realizes that Vercors has presented a broad hint of the duality which Pierre was to discover. In this paragraph Vercors also suggested that Pierre and his kind were in right channels of action during the war, and that they were to constitute the true "men." Pierre at the end of the novel was convinced of his own worth and of the eventual triumph of "men" and addressed the world's tigers with both revulsion and pity: "Te voilà tout fier d'écraser sous tes griffes le dos de l'antilope, et sur ton dos à toi ton ennemi est là, depuis toujours - et tu n'y penses même pas! Bon appétit, messieurs! Faites 'l'histoire,' comme vous dites! Couvrez les villes et les campagnes de vos stériles

cénotaphes, des traces de vos griffes que d'autres griffes effaceraient." (p. 239)

Vercors evidently condemned the actions of men like Broussard, to such an extent that he would set them off from true "men" by formation of a new species. The condemnation must have as part of its background the essay "Le Nord," of Le Sable du Temps. Vercors spoke in that essay of the confusion of loyalty and the difficulty of discovering worthwhile action. These same problems later tortured Pierre in La Puissance du Jour, and led Vercors, and Vercors through Pierre, to a delineation of the two separate species. But the necessary mode of action as defined in "Le Nord" and extended into La Puissance du Jour was the treatment of man as an end and never as a means.

In the essay following "Le Nord" in Le Sable du Temps Vercors' bitterness about the loss of his self-respect certainly must have stemmed from the outlined "Nord" and is interesting too in the light of the uncaring "tiger" to come. Vercors might have feared that his lack of concern for Germans he saw killed in a plane crash meant that he could use men as means; thus he would have lost his "qualité d'homme" - exactly as the character Pierre thought he had done.

The next essay of Le Sable du Temps rebelled against the very lack of feeling and sympathy displayed by those who torture others. These torturers are obviously tigers, and Vercors wanted them to be hurt in the same way they hurt others. His idea was not to exact an "eye for an eye," but rather to bring about an end to all torture, since these inhuman individuals would not be able to bear the pain of their own inventions. Similarly, the persons attacked in the essay "L'Oubli," who encouraged inhuman acts during the war, would in the

terminology of 1951 be also called tigers, probably of the kind that are not dangerous if they are thrown their daily portion of meat, or of favors, or of "bread and circuses."

The industrialists and other public citizens who collaborated would land in the second division of tigers: "ceux à qui l'aisance économique permet la méditation" (La Puissance, p. 274), as would the publishers whom Vercors' committee was powerless to censure. Writers who collaborated could be classified as tigers who know they are tigers - the intractable kind - because they could be conscious of their persuasive powers and use them to mislead others.

It seems inescapable that the collection of essays Le Sable du Temps, in presenting Vercors' attitudes during the war, contributed much to his development as a philosopher and a writer. Le Sable du Temps presented Vercors' accounts of actual tragic happenings similar to those he had presented in short fictionalized form in Le Silence de la Mer and La Marche à l'Etoile. Le Sable du Temps showed why Vercors feared the Nazis and their influence, both past and future, on the behavior of France and the whole world. It also presented his growing hatred of war and the inhuman behavior war brings out in men.

In Le Silence de la Mer and La Marche à l'Etoile one can see evidence of that intra-specific duality which would become more and more prevalent in Vercors' writings. It occurred between the German officer-composer and his cruel fellow officers, and then between Muritz, the epitome of "l'homme de bonne volonté," and the cowardly guard, a lackey of the Germans he should have fought and a servile tiger. This duality is evident even though Vercors mentioned in Plus ou moins Homme that he wrote Le Silence de la Mer in order to witness to Frenchmen

and the world that most French people did not give up their struggle against the enemy, that they did not give in to "la tentation diabolique de céder aux avances d'un vainqueur implacable." (p. 301) Even in this passage, however, the words "diabolique" and "implacable" suggest the inhuman qualities applied to the Nazis that later Vercors would apply to "tigers."

In Les Armes de la Nuit there occurred an even more direct confrontation than before between a man of good will and the inhuman forces. This time the less brutish party did not simply become disillusioned: instead, in the person of Pierre Cange, he committed a cruel act against the person of a comrade. Did this one selfish act of self-preservation through the sacrifice of a friend render Pierre Cange evil and inhuman? Vercors' answer to that question led his developing philosophy ultimately to the stand of La Puissance du Jour. The question was not a sterile one: this sort of situation, like those of his earliest two works, did occur, and its unpleasant corollaries had to be faced: were any men less inhuman than the German Nazi torturers, if they were tempted, as they well would be, to sacrifice others' lives to save their own? Vercors provided "Le Nord" as a guidepost to determining the right or wrong of men's conduct, and in La Puissance du Jour that law came to be significant in taxonomic determination.

Les Yeux et la Lumière and Plus ou moins Homme, both dated 1950, carried the attitudes of 1947 further toward the climax of 1951. Plus ou moins Homme appeared first, and elaborated at some length on the philosophical implications of Le Sable du Temps. Vercors immediately stated that "man" needed defining: "Sur cette ambiguïté s'appuient

toutes les tyrannies." (FMH, p. 15) He criticized the complacent attitude of most men, who go no farther than to consider the species man as constituted of creatures similar to themselves. Vercors then proceeded to define the break between man and animal by postulating man's spirit of conscious rebellion against ignorance. Man refuses ignorance, the animal accepts it "ou mieux encore: fait un avec elle" (p. 21). The lion goes downwind of its prey, the beaver builds its dam without deducing or reasoning: "Tout ce que la nature peut faire de soi avec soi-même, il est bien évident qu'elle le sait d'emblée, de toute éternité." (p. 27) What Vercors called "eternity" is not a very objectively-defined space of time; it must actually depend on the amount of time that certain animal species have existed and also on when they acquired their traits of behavior, unless Vercors meant here that all such traits are known to Nature and parcelled out as the species need them. In that case, however, Nature would take on a benevolent aspect which is not present in other works of Vercors, for example in La Puissance du Jour.

Vercors' species concept is evidently a two-dimensional one; he attempted in Plus ou moins Homme to extend back in time to the "man" of 200,000 or 300,000 years ago, but he stressed that he was not trying to fix the point of branching off of the species man. Since he did underline that attitude, capsule descriptions of his ancient man are neither momentarily successful nor convincing: "sans langage sinon quelques onomatopées, sans industrie sinon peut-être la massue pour se défendre, sans feu, sans logement, vivant de la même vie sauvage que les ours ou les loups, ses frères." (p. 22) It seems again that Vercors has employed some popularized concepts of early man and mixed

them all in together without indication as to relative states of development of culture patterns at any one time.

His excursion into paleontology similarly fails to convince a reader: "pendant des milliers de siècles, depuis les premiers sauriens jusqu'au grand singe anthropopithèque, des milliards et des milliards de consciences de soi, faibles lueurs flottantes à la surface du formidable et mystérieux grouillement nocturne, ont ainsi vécu leur vie misérable de proscrits et d'ilotes" (p. 29). Vercors included the time of the early saurians in his range for the development of consciences de soi, suggesting that the character first appeared with the first lizards and in some classifications, with dinosaurs. This would extend the limits for the character far beyond the emergence of any ancestral anthropoid as such. How could Vercors possibly have had any evidence that a Cretaceous dinosaur, for example, knowing he belonged to a doomed race, thereby led a miserable existence? The obvious absence of such evidence reduces the extended-time element of Vercors' species to emotional speculation. The closer Vercors remained to problems connected with present-day man of the Second World War and post-war periods, the more effective were his arguments about species.

He devoted considerable space in Plus ou moins Homme to the idea that elements of Nature (flowers which attract bees, antelopes which attract carnivores like lions and tigers) are "Purs instruments, c'est tout, pour diriger, faire converger, se croiser et se joindre ces voies patientes de l'éternelle nature: les hasards." (p. 31) However, Nature, which provided man with the means to learn, expected man to combat her. Vercors on the same page also suggested that Nature defends herself against man's incursions into her domain; he recalled the Bibli-

cal angels guarding Eden's gates. His description of man's relationship to Nature varied considerably from essay to essay in Plus ou moins Homme and also from Plus ou moins Homme to La Puissance du Jour. It seems that the preceding characterization of Nature as a power encouraging man's inquisitiveness may have been written to win Christian readers; Nature appeared elsewhere in Plus ou moins Homme, in La Puissance du Jour and in Colères as a secretive force barring man from entering a realm of closely-guarded knowledge, and as a hostile force (as, "Le Grand Tigre") hiding man's own downfall from him until it was too late. Thus Vercors on several occasions compared man and his relation with his own body to a captain who had no communication with his ship and knew of no difficulty until the ship listed and began to sink.

From both of these interpretations of Nature, however, one can see that man to Vercors is the only animal who is separated from Nature, who feels conscious of this separation, and who feels the necessity to strike out into unknown regions of knowledge, not with the desire to lose himself again in Nature, but simply because he must. The desire for a reduction of ignorance is ingrained. This view is in the same mood as is the answer to why one must climb a treacherous mountain: "because it is there." So in Plus ou moins Homme Vercors expanded "man" into an animal having culture: he explained art and the sense of beauty, music, literature, science, love and friendship on the basis of man's development of his rebellious nature and his separation from Nature. The advent of love and friendship was the result of man's struggle to communicate with other men in their mutual aloneness. Art became "l'affirmation sublime, fièrement délibérée, de

notre sécession [de la nature] " (p. 44), beauty "une part [de la nature] entraînée en exil avec nous hors du grand tout indivisible" (p. 44). Religion developed "pour expliquer un univers qui se refuse à l'explication" (p. 45); politics was "la perpétuelle tentative des hommes de faire front en commun . . . à toutes les difficultés de vivre" (p. 45).

From a discussion of man Vercors proceeded to a definition of a society as members of one species whose behavior "(conscient ou instinctif) . . . favorise la vie de chaque membre en même temps que celle de l'ensemble." (p. 103) If the behavior veered away from this mean, then the group would disintegrate into individuals striving against each other. Vercors stated that there exist several "constantes morales" which society dared not abandon, including a refusal to lie to one's own people. However, lying has become a more prevalent, more accepted form of behavior, causing Vercors to warn "Si nous ne pouvons plus a priori ajouter foi aux dires d'autrui, il ne nous reste à son égard d'autre alternative que de tenter de le soumettre ou de le tuer." (p. 89) Leaders and writers, who have the responsibility toward their people as outlined in Portrait d'une Amitié and P.P.C., attempt to mislead their followers and thereby hasten the ruin of society and of man. Instead of uniting together as true men in rebellion against ignorance, their common enemy, men have become confused, especially in the light of the nuclear struggle, in their role toward one another: "ils ont perdu leur foi en l'homme, et leur respect" (p. 210). Vercors had long wanted to respect all of humanity and to "faire front" with all men against the enemies of man. But it seems that since to him humanity had split its ranks, he felt compelled to join one side

and condemn the other. An adherence to ideals such as liberty, honor, mutual respect of men for men was not sufficient to reassure Vercors' conscience; too much lying had crept into the use of these ideals, and even criminals and even the Nazis had their "codes of honor."

Thus in Plus ou moins Homme Vercors first described what all men ideally were, and then began to outline what they had actually become. He compared Man to a group of combattants in a ring against lions. (The lion image certainly suggests that everything outside of man, i.e., Nature, or "Le Grand Tigre", is hostile to him.) When instead of fighting as a unified group these combattants turned on one another to fight for possession of the scant array of weapons, they became "les valets abjects des hyènes et des tigres contre leurs frères martyrs." (p. 47) Whoever does not follow "Le Nord" in regard to others and also and also in regard to one's self "fait soumission à la nature et en prend le parti contre l'homme et l'humain." (p. 48) However, Vercors did not yet exclude from humanity those who take the part of Nature against their fellows: "ils sont la proie d'une horrible erreur dans les motifs de leur choix, c'est tout" (p. 50). The Gestapo agent in charge of torturing innocent people was still one of the species, "mais dans le moment où il torture ses frères il ne répond pas aux critères, dénués de toute charge affective, mais exigibles par définition, pour dire qu'il agit 'en homme'" (p. 68).

The short stories of Les Yeux et la Lumière illustrated several points of Plus ou moins Homme, but the definite duality of species was not yet expressed. A strong break did occur between the actions and attitudes of the Portuguese Gaspar and the unscrupulous leader, and more clearly between those of the philosopher Gracch and the tyrant

Othon. The hero common to all the stories was "l'homme non pas zoologique (simple classement dans le règne animal), ni métaphysique (il n'existe pas: la notion d'homme est comme toutes les autres une sécrétion de notre entendement)" (p. 8). Vercors wanted to find the "lowest common denominator" of man, the factor common to all, and he called this the "état de rébellion contre la condition naturelle des consciences de soi." (p. 13)

To the young sculptor of the first story, art and beauty were personal things to be enjoyed in his here and now. When his precious statue threatened his wife, he sacrificed it to save her, regardless of any claim posterity might have on his work. This action corresponded to Vercors' ideas in Plus ou moins Homme on love as a high class of communication between beings, on pure respect for others, and on art as the very personal joy of its creator.

Gaspar Diaz was a good example of a "man," who can lie if he has to, but only to enemies — a very interesting moral standard approved by Vercors in Plus ou moins Homme. When Gaspar observed the leader at the meeting, he saw a man darting sly glances at the trusting members of the organization; the edges of his teeth showed slightly, and he must have presented the aspect of a cunning animal whose prey was almost within reach. Gaspar did not fully understand his own motives, but he found that he could not help this man who lied to his friends. In Pierre Cange's classification, this leader would have attained Tiger Class III: the tiger who knows he is one. He could purposefully lie and deceive his brothers for his own gain, not even believing in a "pouvoir légitime" as did Broussard.

The story of the franc-tireur Arnaud was useful in illustrating the inhumanity of war, and in this way was similar to stories from Le

Sable du Temps. It also underlined again what Vercors considered necessary action for men (in this instance used as a group opposed to tigers): concerted and trustworthy action against a common enemy outside the species. Vercors explained later that Arnaud was finally moved by "cette solidarité humaine pour laquelle se battait la Résistance" (P.P.C., p. 226).

In the artist Luc there was presented an example of attempted non-involvement, something Vercors condemned, especially in artists and intellectuals. It was their special duty to guard the rights of men and to help them maintain a steady and united front. Portrait d'une Amitié and P.P.C. clearly expressed the same thought; and in retrospect one could also compare the behavior of the German officer in Le Silence de la Mer. When the final illusions were swept away as to the motives of the German cause, still this artist and philosopher could not find within himself the strength and courage to rebel against an order he knew to be wrong. If one compares the behavior of the artist Luc with that of the German officer in this story and with that of the other officer in the first story written by Vercors, it seems obvious that non-involvement with one's fellows is condemnable and treason against the species.

Bruno, the man desperately trying to leave a cholera-ridden country, unknowingly was obeying Vercors' law "Le Mord" when he found he could not kill the Dutchman. This story recounted Bruno's climb up a long hill covered with corpses, victims of the disease, a nightmarish scene which adds to the feeling of desperation and thereby to the importance of Bruno's decision against murder.

Gracch the philosopher knew full well the difference between himself and Othon; he realized that Othon's respect for the philosopher's ideals was shallow and his understanding only superficial. Communication between any two persons is difficult, and true communication impossible when one party has disregarded the "constantes morales" in favor of "duperie" and lying to his own people. The last words spoken by Gracch on his way to die, are perfectly understandable in the light of Plus ou moins Homme: Gracch had promised Othon a capsule definition of what he had become in his role as tyrant: "un valet." (p. 247)

In 1951 the break between the two types of men-creatures finally became complete; Vercors chose sides and went his way with what he called "men." The people who disregarded "Le Nord" were no longer simply "men who were not acting like men" but instead were set apart in a species by themselves. The boundary between men and tigers was still somewhat gradational, especially on the tiger side of the line, since the "lowest form" of tiger, it would seem, was pushed into tiger behavior by conditions of his environment: "le froid, la faim, tous les besoins de leur encombrante carcasse" (La Puissance, p. 274). The Nazis were a prime example of tigers, who tried to make their captives either into antelopes so that they would be afraid, or into tigers like themselves. Evidently the qualities of the proud tiger can be developed or instilled in men weak enough to accept them; thus evidently the species boundary can be crossed, at least by weaker men or weaker tigers. Pierre Cange had had to make one mistake in order to realize that he could make no more, that he had to choose for himself, and to earn, what he had up to the time of his mistake taken for granted: the con-

dition of being a human being. But tigers, true tigers of the second order, well back from the line between the species, are blind to their condition: they are "tigres malgré eux" and will never change. Type three, unfortunately, would not want to change.

The three works Les Animaux dénaturés, Sylva, and Zoo contain strong allusions to Vercors' main ideas and do not depart from the mainstream of his philosophy, even though their plot constructions are somewhat fanciful. In Les Animaux and Zoo surely one reason that the "anthropologists" present such a vast and sometimes raucous array of clashing opinions is that Vercors disapproved of the way in which present anthropologists were handling, or rather neglecting, the definition of man. The elderly and respectable scientist Cuthbert Greame, who appeared in these two works, affirmed man's complacent neglect of the subject: "'C'est que la chance lui souriait. La chance qui a fait s'éteindre depuis cinq cent mille ans toutes les espèces intermédiaires. Ainsi notre esprit vivait-il dans une tranquillité trompeuse.'" (Les Animaux, p. 87) A layman in the story, Templemore, completely naive in regard to anthropological knowledge, saw that man, a unique being whose behavior constantly changes, needed defining; and he risked his life to see the definition set down. A second layman, the fluttery but sensible judge's wife, helped her distinguished husband to resolve the species problem: "'Alors, si un être ne se demande rien... Mais là, vraiment rien, rien du tout... eh bien, je pense qu'il faut vraiment qu'il soit une bête.'" (Zoo, p. 83)

The date of Les Animaux dénaturés was 1952; perhaps it is not out of the question to see in this work written so soon after La Puissance du Jour simply an attack on the same problem from a different angle.

If from reading Les Animaux dénaturés men saw a necessity to examine themselves and their motives even just because a band of "tropis" might be discovered one day, it might be discovered that what was thought to be one simple species encompassed Vercors' two. If men realized their basic and widespread lack of fruitful communication with each other while being amused at the conflict among the learned gentlemen at the trial of Templemore, they might realize how much they need to try to understand one another, to benefit the whole of mankind. And if such understanding could be attained, Vercors' ranks of "men" and "tigers" could well close again and merge into a world-wide society. This certainly is what Vercors would desire, and seemingly in the same vein he hopefully wrote that after two to ten more generations civilizations will have approached each other enough to be similar, but at the same time such a regrouping "n'entraîne nullement dans ma pensée la disparition de l'individu, la démission, au profit de la masse, de la personne." (PMH, p. 117)

Pierre Cange had condemned racism in La Puissance du Jour as a pact with Nature, Le Grand Tigre, as a judgment on one's fellows, and thus as tiger behavior. In Les Animaux dénaturés and Zoo, then, certainly one tiger appears - "Julius Drexler," the anthropologist advocating the hominid hierarchy (with the white man "necessarily" at the top). Vercors warned on not a few occasions that learned men are not necessarily exempt from the condition of tiger, and they can be the most dangerous kind because they are admired, trusted, and wholeheartedly believed.

Templemore, the questioner and initiator of the worthwhile action of the story, and Judge Draper, the resolver of the problem of man's identity, shared and presented Vercors' views in Les Animaux dénaturés

and Zoo, ably supported by several other characters including at times "Pop," who, when questioned whether any "animals" carry good luck charms, retorted, "Les animaux vivent dans la nature, ils ne s'en sont séparés, arrachés comme nous, et n'ont aucune raison..." (Zoo, p. 88) The judge commented, "si nous n'étions pas, comment dirai-je, des animaux 'dénaturés,' nous ne nous demanderions pas ce que nous sommes, nous ne discuterions pas pour le savoir.'" (Zoo, p. 98) The judge thus explained man's inquisitive nature on the basis of his separation from Nature; Vercors had already cited this behavior as a necessary outcome of the separation. The conclusion in both Les Animaux dénaturés and Zoo was that "l'humanité n'est pas un état à subir. C'est une dignité à conquérir. Dignité douloureuse. On la conquiert sans doute au prix des larmes." (Les Animaux, p. 240) This is no different from the feelings of Pierre Cange on the quality of humanity: he came to know that "la qualité d'homme ne nous est pas donnée avec notre dépouille, qu'elle ne peut donc nous être reprise, mais qu'elle monte et descend en nous-mêmes comme l'aiguille du baromètre selon notre tension intérieure, notre 'climat,' - et nos pensées, et nos actes." (La Puissance, p. 265)

In Sylva the relationship of the story line to Vercors' philosophies seems somewhat less direct. The book itself is considerably less fanciful than David Garnett's Lady into Fox (1924), which the narrator of Sylva mentioned and in which the inverse metamorphosis took place. Certainly more possibilities would occur for Vercors to illustrate his views on man in the case presented in Sylva than in the situation of Lady into Fox. In the latter story, the narrator lost

his sanity trying to keep his wife/vixen happy and content, with him, while she longed to escape to the woods.

There is some basis for suggesting that Vercors in this work exalted human life and especially the kind of human being who made sacrifices to help another. The narrator, viewing Sylva in the shambles she had made of his room, exclaimed, "Peut-être n'ai-je jamais, autant qu'à cette minute, ressenti d'emblée, sensuellement, la vérité qui commence, paraît-il, à s'imposer aux physiciens: que la matière inanimée, c'est le désordre et que le seul ordre, c'est la vie."

(*Sylva*, p. 33) There followed no indication of the source of this remarkable statement, and likewise no indication of the meaning given to "order" in this context. But perhaps the account of the slow dawn of consciousness in Sylva was intended to show first, that a condition of the mind could be changed; second, that a member of one species could metamorphose into a member of another (with the underlying man \rightleftharpoons tiger matter implied); and third and most obvious from what Vercors included in the novel itself, to show some possible steps in the evolution of man.

At first Sylva responded to being locked into a confining room by intense escape-oriented activity; next she gave way to an animal boredom. "L'ennui de l'animal prend plus que le nôtre encore cette signification de totale vanité, et contre un ennui si énorme, l'animal ne connaît qu'un remède: c'est de dormir." (p. 75) The first tears, said the narrator Richwick, suggested the beginning of conscious sadness, and of memory to produce such an emotion.

At one point in the novel, Richwick, like Pierre Cange, would have liked to escape humanity; in this case in order to become a fox

with Sylva to "reconquérir l'Eden - l'innocence, la joie, la liberté, rejeter le fardeau de la condition humaine, la rigueur de la condition de chrétien. . . " (p. 114), but as one could predict from knowledge of Vercors' other works, this did not happen. Richwick simply was not a character who could leave humanity to become an uncaring being.

A vivid reflection of Pierre Cange's idea that "live meat" and all Nature are outside of and hostile to man appeared in Sylva when Richwick sought human companionship in his anguish over the adventure of Sylva with the woodcutter. His disgust at the townspeople, while undoubtedly partly due to sexual frustration, recalled Pierre's disgust and horror at the sight of the pulsating brain: "J'étais envahi de nouveau par cette obsession nauséuse de pullulement organique que je venais de fuir [dans la forêt] , je n'avais fait que changer de surabondance . . . je ne pouvais plus voir dans ce ramas de chair humaine qu'une entreprise molle et aveugle vers des agglutinations obscènes . . ." (p. 139)

Sylva did not become a human being simply when she learned to use tools and utensils: "—cependant elle restait, sur l'essentiel, soumise comme les premiers jours à ses entraînements, ses appétits, ses craintes, ses élans, elle y obéissait d'emblée et sans délibérer fût-ce une seconde, ne paraissant pas même entrevoir que le refus était possible, au moins le choix ou l'examen, au moins l'hésitation." (p. 149) Because of the complete absence of "refus," "choix" and "hésitation" Vercors would consider Sylva at that point not yet human. He compared her development in general to the evolution of man - Doctor Sullivan commented on this at several points in Sylva, noting when Sylva used tools that she was behaving "en primate très évolué; c'est un bon bout de chemin à travers

l'évolution, mon cher!" (p. 150-151) However, Vercors surely would not try to make the changes in Sylva fit too closely with the long-term changes that produced human beings, since the process of her learning was all artificial, induced by and imitative of men. After Sylva crossed the real barrier, that of gaining consciousness of herself, Vercors considered her a human being and defined her further progress in terms of rebellion, separation from Nature and refusal of ignorance. When she learned to laugh, the narrator refused to recognize it as a reflex action in which "l'âme se débarrasse d'une image qui lui semble inférieure à la dignité de sa fonction, exactement comme l'estomac se débarrasse de ce dont il ne veut pas garder la responsabilité, et par le même procédé d'une convulsion grossière." (p. 215) This interpretation would have linked a function of "man," an expression of thought and judgment, to a function of the physical body - over which conscious man has no control, and Vercors' interpretation of man could not allow this. He explained the laugh rather as a response to a sudden release of fear, therefore governed more by the conscious mind and will: "[le rire] était né de cette frayeur même, soudain transformée en joie" (p. 215).

After Sylva recognized the inevitability of death, she once more momentarily fled the manor house; upon her return Richwick noticed a change in her expression; her gaze was no longer "tout en surface, sans arrière-plans"; "Ce n'étaient plus seulement deux yeux qui voient, mais qui pénétraient, des yeux qui entraient dans les miens, comme s'ils eussent voulu découvrir, à leur tour, une réponse, un secret." (p. 233)

Richwick's sojourn in London with Dorothy Sullivan intervened at this point. Richwick tried sincerely to save Dorothy; by joining her in her drug-taking he hoped to lead her back through understanding of

her problem. He saw the difference between the cases of Dorothy and Sylva: "C'est que Sylva s'extraît douloureusement de l'inconscience bestiale, tandis que Dorothy retourne lâchement s'y enfouir, s'y dissoudre, s'y oublier..." (p. 245) This may be a key to the reason for inclusion of the pages of description of euphoria induced by drugs, and of the sordid atmosphere of Dorothy's London apartment. Dorothy had succumbed long before to the temptation of taking drugs, had abandoned herself to it, and did not want to quit her habit. She had crossed a boundary line from the side of man proud of his struggle with life and its difficulties to that of the tiger who, overwhelmed by those difficulties, sought and welcomed oblivion such as could be found in drugs. Sylva's mind and spirit, on the other hand, were unexplored territory; she had only lately become a human being by the development of what Vercors considered as the necessary requisite: a sense of rebellion. She was beginning to expand her curiosity in all directions with no thought of turning back - in this she resembled the ideal Man of Vercors who had to satisfy the cravings of his curious nature. Rich- vick could not really cross the line to help Dorothy; he could not understand her motives unless he abandoned himself to drug addiction, and if he did that, he would have lost himself and helped no one.

On his way home to Sylva he restated what had appeared near the close of Les Animaux dénaturés: "la qualité d'une âme ne se mesure pas à ce qu'elle est, mais à ce qu'elle devient." (Sylva, p. 260-261)

In Sylva also, Vercors suggested a further trait of the human species: that the veneer of humanity was thin. He cited as evidence one's sudden start at an unexpected sound and compared this to Sylva's break after a rabbit which she then decided she didn't really want -

"ces fesses indépendantes, qui au fracas subit du rapide avaient voulu s'enfuir sans même que la cervelle fût avertie, elles montraient à combien peu de profondeur se tiennent encore, sous la croûte civilisée, les dernières survivances du réflexe de la biche sauvage." (p. 264)

When Sylva broke off her chase of the rabbit and could explain neither why she began nor why she ended the chase, Vercors called this a weakening of an animal instinct - the remains of which cause the involuntary jump.

As the narrator remarked, the book's purpose was to outline the metamorphosis of Sylva from a fox to a woman, and when she began obviously to choose her actions and to carry out her choices he considered the metamorphosis complete. Vercors had him realize that "choix et automatisme s'opposent par définition. Toute possibilité de choix exclut évidemment l'automatisme (et adieu l'instinct) comme tout automatisme exclut nécessairement la possibilité du choix (et adieu la raison)." (p. 265) Vercors injected at the end a note of warning reminiscent of Jean Prévost's remark to him on man's need for outside sources to tell him what he is: "l'homme s'est égaré parmi les arbres des questions innombrables, il a perdu de vue la forêt de l'interrogation qui les englobe toutes." (p. 273) He continued immediately in a vein suggesting once again the inevitable separation of man's mind and body, ". . . pourquoi, à quelles fins, notre cerveau a-t-il été créé si achevé qu'il est capable de tout comprendre, mais si infirme qu'il ne sait rien - ni ce qu'il est lui-même, ni le corps qu'il dirige, ni cet univers dont ils sortent?" (p. 273)

The reading of Les Divagations d'un Français en Chine produced mainly a delightful number of images of China, including detailed

observations about the food, careful but lively descriptions of the shops and their vast array of merchandise, fascinating descriptions of scenery, and amusing and charming anecdotes showing Vercors' gift for communication with others. A few observations relating to the basic interests of this paper were also notable. Describing a visit to the theatre Vercors commented, "Si l'art est un défi, comme je le pense, si c'est la tentative épique de créer, face à la 'marâtre nature,' un univers humain et rien qu'humain, compréhensible à l'homme et à l'homme seul - ce que nous avons à présent sous les yeux en est le suprême accomplissement. Tout y est créé - recréé. Que reste-t-il, sous ces arabesques noire et rouge, rouge et blanche, noire et jaune, de nos visages zoologiques? Ce sont des visages pourtant - mais à notre décision, à notre goût, non plus à celle d'une nature aveugle." ²⁸

Vercors has a gift for expressing much in short spaces: in these few remarks he expressed first his interest in the Chinese theatre as such, next his attitude toward nature; he repeated the idea of the basic proud rebellion that is man, the role of art as defined first in Plus ou moins Homme, and even a hint of his hope that civilizations will merge, bloodlessly, in the future - for this writer does not believe that the colors of the faces in the quotation were chosen haphazardly. Vercors' desire for better communication among men was apparent too in his exploding of an old myth about the Chinese: "Où donc est cette fameuse impassibilité, cette âme secrète, impénétrable? Elle est où était la nôtre, quand nous avions les Allemands chez nous. Combien

²⁸ Vercors, Les Divagations d'un Français en Chine, Paris, 1956, p. 60-61.

nous avons dû, nous aussi, paraître alors mystérieux et inaccessibles!" (p. 64-65) It continued to be apparent to Vercors that men must strive to understand each other: communication only results when men have labored in order to establish it.

In the novel Colères, the issue was not so much "duality of the species" as it was "worthwhile action" - a discussion of the best way for the rebellious nature of man to assert itself. Tigers were not so much in evidence in Colères, although they did appear in minor roles as policemen and also perhaps as the owners of the plant which went out on strike. The plant owners never appeared as such, but from their descriptions could be called tigerish in their behavior toward their workers: they singled out certain unions for the pay raise and ignored the more left-leaning unions in an effort to force the latter into changing their organization. Policemen did appear as characters: they attempted to stifle any and all workers' demonstrations, they broke up peaceful protest meetings with clubs, shot a "North Af" who persuaded his fellows that crossing picket lines was unfair, and in order to weaken the strike they nearly killed Pélion, the brains behind the whole movement. The chief of police too was a wily tiger who tried to tempt the scientist Mirambeau with a national prize if he would stop endangering his career by participation in a rabble movement. The police were presented as lackeys after the fashion of the guard in La Marche à l'Etoile or even of Broussard of La Puissance du Jour; they supported the side with the money, the brute force, and the "pouvoir légitime."

At first reading it seems that in Colères Vercors discussed two different but parallel types of rebellious (i.e., human) action; that

of Egmont, and that of Pélion and Mirambeau as heads of the strikers. Egmont's form of rebellion began in the realization that his trance-voyages were inside his own body. He decided to exploit this new possibility of communication between thought and the body, to cure if possible his gangrene in the process, and to "bring back" information about man's body. Egmont knew that communication had never yet been established, but wondered if it were not possible. He cited the case of a man condemned to hang: as he stood on the scaffold, his blood circulation continued, his liver continued to function, and so on. But perhaps his heartbeat changed, the adrenal glands increased output, or even one kidney became blocked. Egmont wondered, Did They Know? Did they sense death's approach? He wanted to find out, and began to "submerge" more and more.

On the other side, Pélion, the brusque young worker and leader of the strike, always found Egmont a stultified, resigned middle-aged poet of no conscience who hid "dans ses nobles larmes comme le rat dans son fromage. Tout lui sert de serrure. Sa maison dans les bois. Sa collection de bêtes empaillées." (Colères, p. 55) Pélion believed in action, in rousing the people against the unjust management and in "taking his lumps" if necessary. Pélion always wanted to make sure of the oneness of mind of the strikers, to get them to agree and wholeheartedly support their cause, and in this he certainly spoke for his creator Vercors.

Pélion's cause triumphed at the end of Colères; Egmont had to abandon his explorations. But as the character Pierre Cange stressed in La Puissance du Jour, success doesn't necessarily justify the means

used to gain it! It is necessary to look further for the justification of one mode of action. A clue came when Egmont began to abandon the attempt at recollection of discoveries he made inside his body; he began to renounce life among men: "Me rappeler, me souvenir, disait-il, à quoi bon, après tout? C'est du luxe. Un luxe intellectuel. . . . Je ne veux plus rien 'connaître,' je veux exactement le contraire; oublier toute conscience, vivre ma vie organique, m'épanouir en végétal!" (p. 231) This desire suspiciously recalls Pierre Cange's desire to become a "thing of Nature" - the desire Vercors later through him rejected as inhuman. Egmont continued to have moments when he wished to bring back information, but his wish was selfish and belligerent. He refused to support the strike in any way, saying that he wished to learn the difficulties of his own person before trying to understand others.

When Egmont lapsed completely into the "submerged" state and was only with great difficulty recalled to conscious reality, the effect of the return resembled that of Richwick from London in Sylva - both men were forced to realize that they would not understand the nether world unless they gave themselves up to it, in which case they would bring back nothing to help humanity. On an individual level, both men decided that living in reality was a more worthwhile and a more fruitful existence than that of oblivion; they could neither act as tigers nor be the victim of "Le Grand Tigre."

Moreover, when Egmont wanted to establish "contacts conscients entre le psychique et le somatique," to communicate as far as the "substrat du protoplasme" (p. 178-179) he was actually flying in the face of the stern warning of Cange in La Puissance du Jour: "pas de pacte avec le Grand Tigre! Les hommes, les hommes seuls - sans cela,

gare: vous êtes bon pour devenir tigre, vous aussi!" (La Puissance, p. 259)

The action of the strikers, directed against tigers and for men (and upholding "Le Nord,") was a form of true human activity. Egmont's rebellion, which seemed to have a good purpose, was actually a retreat which abandoned the struggle of life for a cowardly oblivion. When Egmont, at the very beginning of the book, was horrified at the death of his scientist friend he selfishly began the retreat that led to his trance state. He ignored the lesson the tortured scientist tried to teach all men: "La mort est une saloperie. Faut jamais l'accepter, pour soi, pour personne. Faut pas se faire complice! . . . Faut l'obliger à me frapper debout." (Colères, p. 23-24) This man seemed at first to torture himself needlessly, but recalling Vercors' interpretation of Nature as "Le Grand Tigre" and the application of "Le Nord" to the self as well as to others, it can be seen that the dying man upheld in the highest sense the refusal to make a pact with nature, and without doubt was a man in Vercors' sense of the word. Egmont, on the other hand, like Pierre Cange had to win his way back to humanity from the remote fringes through which he stumbled.

Along with this further definition of the characteristic behavior of true man Vercors included in Colères some observations reminiscent of other parts of his work which have been mentioned. One of the characters, a writer dying of tuberculosis, discussed with Egmont his novel on men's willingness to be fooled about death and to be complacent about ignorance (recalling Les Animaux dénaturés). Thus Vercors criticized again neither the ideal nor the present true man, but what man has become in forgetting "Le Nord."

Man's separation from his body and from the rest of Nature was evident in Egmont's behavior after he was burned in a fire at his house: he continued to think and to carry objects from the building, but without realizing it, he was groaning and bending nearly double. He only felt pain after he was told of his injuries. This led Egmont to speculate that man is the only animal to feel pain, and, finally, to state that consciousness itself is pain. "Tout se passe comme si On nous disait: 'Vous la voulez, la connaissance? La voilà.' Mais voilà quelque chose avec: la douleur. A prendre ou à laisser. Nous ne vendons pas séparément." (p. 132) This is a little stronger thought than Vercors had before offered: that the separation from Nature involved life's difficulties and struggles, and also, necessarily, a consciousness of pain.

An examination of Egmont's conversations after journeys inside his body recalls portions of La Puissance du Jour and Sylva and stressed again that the body and "man" are strangers. Egmont could recall his experiences only in terms of such things as hills, rivers, warm mangrove swamps, clusters of multi-colored polyps, and sea urchins and mollusks in wild frays. Egmont explained the discrepancies in correspondance of vocabulary to object by saying that what he described was only hazily recollected, and also that it had never been before described. But Vercors may have used such striking imagery in order to show once more that man's body is only a part of Nature, while his mind is not. The pulsating, languid, blind activity that Egmont found inside his body suggests Pierre Cange's attitude toward the mass of brain matter seen during the operation, and also Richwick's attitude both toward the forest and toward the masses of people in town.

Finally, even the type of revolt attempted by Egmont, the exploration of the body, may someday be worthwhile, if man could learn how to make the conquest of his body without losing control of his spirit. As one character in Colères said of Egmont: "'Cette téméraire aventure où il s'est enfoncé, c'est peut-être de la révolte à l'état pur, puisque le voici aux prises avec l'ennemi au sein même de son sac à viande. Mais du même coup le voilà perdu dans son univers organique, l'esprit et la raison sacrifiées au triomphe stérile et passablement obscène d'une chair aveugle, exubérante... Au bout du compte, est-ce révolte ou immense soumission? Je n'en sais rien.'" (p. 325)

P.P.C., as Vercors said, is not a book but "un dossier"; its main relationship to the subject of this paper is that most of the documents published advocated and even begged for better communication and development of understanding and accord between nations, and between groups inside nations themselves. With that purpose in mind, he warned the communists not to abandon morality and truthfulness, two qualities that he had already said were in danger of being corrupted. He wanted the communists, whose broad purposes he accepted and upheld, to practice these virtues in the pure state in dealing with each other and with non-communists. In precise terms he stated that the role of the intellectual and of the writer was to observe and warn the people of their excesses, and to help the various cultures to approach each other. With the same sentiment that he expressed in Les Animaux dénaturés toward the problem of defining man he noted in P.P.C., "Je crois, avec beaucoup de force, qu'il est vain d'essayer d'établir un dialogue entre des gens qui ne sont pas, d'abord, accordés au moins sur quelques idées, ou plutôt sur quelques principes." (p. 77) The remainder of the people were

not without responsibility toward these intellectuals, however; they had to open their minds to the teachings of their prophets, to men like Pierre and the other prisoners of war who staved off death to show the world the danger of giving power to tigers. The people had to learn to come to the aid of those who were willing to sacrifice themselves to avert the situation in which "une sauvagerie triomphante submergeât à jamais l'humanité." (P.P.C., p. 309)

Vercors reaffirmed in P.P.C. that, unfortunately, "L'espèce humaine est divisée. Elle est divisée spirituellement, politiquement, socialement, moralement. . . . Et la seule alternative pour notre monde d'aujourd'hui, c'est la guerre ou la coexistence." (p. 83) Two sorts of coexistence seemed possible to Vercors: a hostile one with no exchange, and one permitting exchange of views "pour que les deux parties s'enrichissent l'une l'autre." (p. 83) This statement appeared in an article by Vercors published in Russia. The division could apply to the aforementioned man/tiger split, or equally well to the East/West split, but not to East as either man or tiger and West as the other. Vercors has never suggested that this was the case even though he called himself a "fellow-traveler." In fact, he recalled in P.P.C. for the Russians their country's participation in the war on the Allied side, saying "Il s'agit maintenant de montrer que cet accord n'était pas fortuit, que cette conception de base sur ce qui est humain, et qui est l'essentiel, n'a pas disparu avec la lutte . . ." (p. 84). This accord on the value of human life should form the basis for post-war East-West agreement.

Also in P.P.C. Vercors re-expressed an idea that appeared in Plus ou moins Homme - that heroism, honor and justice were no longer uncor-

rupted ideals. Thus the defenders of Stalingrad and the defenders of Berlin were heroes, but their ideas of man were different: one group died for an "idée de l'homme irrécusable, et . . . les autres ont été atrocement mystifiés et sont morts pour une conception exécrationnelle."

(p. 218) Vercors would class the German heroes as tigers. But what should they have done to avoid the label? Pierre Cange gave the answer in La Puissance du Jour, during his argument with Broussard, who immediately countered in the tradition of the blind tiger in submission to any "pouvoir légitime."

Moi - Connaissez naturellement fameux précepte d'Anatole France: 'Il est beau pour un soldat de désobéir à des ordres criminels.'

Brous. - Insoutenable. Ne serait plus un soldat: un soldat ne juge pas les ordres. Ne peut donc savoir si l'ordre est criminel. Sophisme absurde. (p. 145)

Vercors made it completely clear that war was a hateful thing initiated by tigers, bent on misleading both their own countrymen and their prey, and completely careless of their responsibility to mankind.

As he had in Sylva, Vercors suggested in P.P.C. that the crust of "civilization" on man was thin, but in the latter work it was not animal instincts of the chase or of flight that lurked beneath the surface, but "le tigre"; "il faut si peu de chose pour qu'il ressurgisse, balayant en une seconde des efforts millénaires" (p. 307). However, in 1956, the year this statement first appeared, Vercors could continue, with more optimism and determination than he expressed in 1951, by saying that man, and true "men," advance through history: "c'est cette fragile enveloppe qui demeure, contre cette obscure poussée de lave, la plus forte." (p. 307) Vercors advised that the correct behavior toward tigers during a time of peace, however tenuous the peace may be, is

to draw them into the circle of those who are dancing in celebration of the peace. By increasing the tempo of the dance, one keeps them from stirring up trouble among the sincere participants. (p. 278-279)

The same kind of optimism appeared in Sur ce Rivage, where, although tragedy initiated by "tigers" struck some innocent characters, the narrator in each case evidently believed in the eventual triumph of "man". The tigers ranged from brutal (the stepfather in La liberté de décembre) to submissive to "pouvoir légitime" (Le Prêtre in Le Périple) to simply callous (society in Clémentine and Monsieur Prousthe).

Le Prêtre, boyhood companion of the narrator of Le Périple, was a liar and thief as a child, and a coward who needed others to help him fight his personal battles. But his behavior seems at first something he would outgrow; he had cheated the narrator out of a prized toy, and had taken personal revenge for a defeat in a community water fight. Even Le Prêtre's scorn for the narrator's honorable behavior during receipt of Le Prêtre's revenge is not atypical of juvenile behavior: "sur les lèvres du grand Le Prêtre je ne trouvais qu'un sourire subreptice, dans son regard qu'une ironie énorme. Il était clair qu'il me trouvait un pauvre et complet idiot."²⁹ When one reads further, however, it soon becomes clear that Le Prêtre even as a child was actually a "tiger" whose basic instincts clashed dangerously with those of the narrator. He always had henchmen who performed for him the disagreeable or dangerous tasks. This recalls the German officer of Les Yeux et la Lumière who painted a landscape while a town burned. Le Prêtre lied

²⁹ Sur ce Rivage, I, Le Périple, p. 23.

first as a child to obtain the prized plaything, and later during a wager with his brother-in-law. This lying was not to enemies; it was not necessary in order to save Le Prêtre's life; it was simply "duperie" of his own friends and again marked him as a tiger.

His constant changes of allegiance before and during the war suggest a willingness to support the cause of power, of "interior cohesion" (as in Broussard's case), and of force. It is not surprising, moreover, that a tiger should fail to understand why a one-time friend should want to end a friendship over political views. The tiger composed separate codes of "honor" for business and for friendship, using men as means or not as it pleased him, and seeing no ambiguity in his actions. This exchange took place between Le Prêtre and the narrator: "M'aimes-tu donc si peu? --Plus que toi sans doute, puisque tu pourrais m'assommer, et moi non. --Mais, bon sang! s'écria-t-il comme excédé, faut-il toujours le répéter? Quel rapport?" (p. 42) The narrator commented meaningfully, "Si je me mouvais dans un univers de cartons [pour classer les sentiments], Le Prêtre se mouvait, lui, dans celui d'une sauvagerie animale où tantôt l'on s'aime, tantôt l'on se dévore, selon l'heure ou la saison." (p. 45) That statement with its images of carnivores should banish all doubt from the reader's mind as to the nature of Le Prêtre! Henceforth the reader had only to look for the inevitable serious clash between the two, whose paths continued to cross unceasingly. When Le Prêtre joined the Resistance, he needed to escape from the Vichy officials whom he no longer trusted (not even in their sense of the term). The narrator considered him a worthwhile recruit, after he would have proven himself, of course. He did not yet realize that Le Prêtre could switch sides at will, that he had no morality at all,

in short that he was a tiger. This recalls again La Puissance du Jour, and Pierre Cange's statement that the world had run a great risk and hadn't realized it.

After Le Prêtre went to Morocco, fewer meetings between him and the narrator occurred. This respite gave Vercors a chance to insert some new tigers. These were of the economically comfortable class, dabblers in art and philosophy, tigers whom the narrator met on his trip to Algeria. In the midst of toasts to friendship and fraternity these people could express shock at the narrator's emotions in regard to the poor sections of the city which he had seen: "—Ah, non, s'écria le syndicaliste, vous n'allez pas vous attendrir, vous aussi, sur les Bougnoules! (30) Nous les connaissons bien, croyez-moi, ils vivent dans ce qu'ils aiment: la paresse et la crasse. Je vous assure qu'ils ne méritent pas mieux." (p. 106) Racism was certainly a violation of the species boundary outlined by "Le Nord":

During the narrator's search for his Algerian friend, a government official's comment on Le Prêtre immediately placed him again in the same species: "L'efficacité, n'est-ce pas? Ce mot, cette notion-là tient lieu de tout. Pour les hommes comme lui . . ." (p. 136). Or, "the end justifies the means." After suddenly being surrounded by four men in the green berets of the repression forces, the narrator knew, as did the reader, that Le Prêtre was waiting for him - somewhere safely out of the way. Their conversation was brief; the narrator had

30 A pejorative term applied to North Africans and also to French colonists who moved back to France. "Riff-raff."

"asked for it," and Le Prêtre was going to keep order and save lives by any means. This is again similar to Broussard's insistent leaning on the "pouvoir légitime" as the answer to all conflict.

Awaiting torture, the narrator puzzled at Le Prêtre's strange behavior, and suddenly saw the species Man divide itself in his mind:

Est-il possible, pensais-je, qu'il existe deux races sur cette terre, rien que deux, mais toujours et partout? Les hommes de la raison exigeante et rebelle et leur appétit de justice, les bêtes de la volonté native de la jungle et leur appétit de puissance? Est-il possible, pensai-je comme sous une clarté soudain aveuglante, qu'on trouve les uns et les autres jusque dans nos propres rangs? . . . Au point que n'importe qui les eût alors confondus au sein d'une seule espérance? Est-il possible que même dans la résistance, et même dans les camps, et même parmi les combattants pour la justice, les deux races coexistent comme partout ailleurs? Et qu'elles continueront de se perpétuer, toujours et en tous lieux, jusqu'à la fin des temps? Ne pourra-t-on jamais se reposer, enfin se reposer? (p. 149-150)

The narrator had arrived, approximately, at Vercors' 1951 attitude.

He jumped at the appearance of his guides to the torture room. They were men of huge bodies and cold, steel-blue eyes. The implication is that Le Prêtre's methods included using former S.S. tortionnaires. Vercors vigorously condemned this deliberate revival of tiger behavior, this deliberate return to Nazi techniques. It was a direct and flagrant violation of "Le Nord" which proclaimed such behavior inhuman.

Finally, the narrator compared Le Prêtre to a hero of Sophocles who "subit sa fatalité . . . comme animal et ne le sait même pas. . . . quel mal résiste à la connaissance, lequel résisterait à la pleine lumière? . . . je pensais: Antigone la perçoit, cette lumière, tous ces Créon l'ignorent, c'est tout. Pauvres Créon." (p. 155-156) With

that, and with the sentiment of "rolling up the sleeves" from the beginning of the book, it is clear that the narrator realized that his task had only begun. Not only must he warn the world about tigers, but he must also work actively against their ever-lasting evil ways, and spread the light of real honor and truth to those tigers that could be reached. The book ends on a note of cautious but determined optimism.

Vercors elaborated on the aims of Le Périple in the preface to Monsieur Prousthe. "On comprend bien, sans doute, que de parler de race est une métaphore, qu'il s'agit en somme d'une tournure de l'esprit. Mais est-ce une métaphore? La dure expérience de notre époque nous montre que, sous la pression des faits, une tournure de l'esprit peut en venir à imprégner celui-ci si complètement, qu'elle en devient indélébile comme la couleur de l'épiderme." ³¹

Monsieur Prousthe itself was what it purported to be - a "souvenir." The characters were not sharply portrayed and many scenes of carefree children at play were included. There was a happy ending for the narrator and the victim of the bankruptcy, Noëlle. The tiger who caused the bankruptcy played only a small role, and his actions actually led the narrator to discover happiness in helping Noëlle. The loss of the old man's honor was strongly presented, and certainly reflected Vercors' idea that virtues were being corrupted and moral constants abandoned. Even this loss of honor, however, the narrator learned in bits and pieces from friends of M. Prousthe, friends who sincerely loved both the old man and the narrator, and whose accounts were tempered by that

³¹ Sur ce Rivage, II, Monsieur Prousthe, p. 8.

love. Although Vercors presented here as before the decline of human values, the general feeling was of optimism, of human warmth and communication, and of the triumph of "men" over their common enemy, the tigers.

The third volume of Sur ce Rivage, including La liberté de décembre and Clémentine, returned to themes of violence and tragedy. The actions of Granval, the stepfather in La liberté de décembre, are especially shocking, and suggest that Vercors had not carried his hope of reconciliation of the species to the point of forgetting that the separation still existed.

Granval was another example of a tiger-patron of the arts; he collected rare bits of sculpture, and other delicate art objects. At the same time he mocked Vercors' concepts of beauty, calling all beauty nothing but "trompe-l'ennui." Vercors' careful outline of Granval's exquisite taste only served to underline his tiger's actions in situations concerning human beings, including his wife, whose money he squandered, and his stepchild, whom he seduced.

This connoisseur of art was an advocate of force: "Et moi non plus je n'aime pas les faibles; et je ne peux comprendre pourquoi il faudrait les défendre contre les forts. La sélection naturelle ne s'arrête pas aux frontières de l'homme." ³² But Vercors said in P.P.C. that this attitude toward the weak was a sterile, racist judgment of one's fellows; it was the tactic employed by the Nazis, who took it upon themselves to

³² Sur ce Rivage, III, La liberté de décembre, p. 97.

be the agents of "natural selection" - they attempted to make a pact with "Le Grand Tigre"!

Granval, who appears to be the epitome of the tiger, credited the ostrich with great good sense. This cowardly bird who retreated from danger, who hid from life's difficulties, in Granval's eyes did well to spare itself "un bien sale moment."

This man was not only a tiger of "Class II" but also of "Class III"; he proclaimed, "Je suis comme je suis et n'ai nulle intention de me remanier. Au moins j'ai ceci de bon que j'abhorre les secrets, les mensonges, les hypocrisies." (p. 135) The last statement is heavy with Vercors' irony: this man boasted of his tiger character and considered this proof of his hate of lies, but behaved as a liar and hypocrite toward all of humanity. And this man prospered; because of his audacity and finesse d'esprit he became a cardinal. This was the final and crowning blow to the forces of respect of humanity in this story.

The thread of optimism is subordinated to Vercors' bitter hate of tigers in La liberté de décembre. The narrator, however, did realize Granval's carnivorous nature in time to be saved from ruin, and the story ended with at least his spirit intact.

The other half of this volume, Clémentine, is also a bitter commentary on the downfall of society - its neglect of responsibility toward those who have performed services. Vercors criticized this callous behavior, this sterile judgment of human beings according to iron-clad laws whether written or unwritten. Unlearned or no, Clémentine was a real person; she saw the line of Jewish children being herded to their deaths and was affected: "Au milieu de la nuit, elle se réveilla,

et sans rime ni raison, elle se dit soudain qu'elle n'était pas heureuse." (p. 192) She did not fill her emptiness with pleasure, but through grueling hours of work to help her companions in a German prison camp. "On l'embrassait. On l'aimait. C'était merveilleux. Le vide à la place du coeur avait tout à fait disparu." (p. 209)

After she lost her post-war job, after she was arrested and jailed, the "vide" returned. What was she now? a human being or not? She was certainly not a tiger, but rather one of those that "Le Nord" tried to protect: one of those that tigers, even in the form of society itself, condemn the quickest, one whom "neolithic" laws crush the most. Although the narrator again escaped, he felt the chill, the load of guilt borne by society and its corrupting influence, the tigers.

In P.P.C. Vercors told of seeing a film of the street-by-street destruction of Warsaw, and of the profound impression of the chaos on him. He speculated on the minds of the men who would give the order to do such a thing. "Peut-il donc exister dans l'espèce humaine des hommes qui éprouvent, à détruire les efforts et les oeuvres de l'espèce humaine, cette ivresse convulsionnaire? Que sont-ils donc? Sont-ils des hommes? S'ils le sont, que sommes-nous?" (p. 303) Vercors had asked those questions and had investigated the sharp division between two basic motives in human beings since the writing of his first récit.

Vercors' early writings concern the tragedy and disillusionment that certain characters caused in others' lives; he progressed from there to a belief that causing or desiring to cause such personal human tragedy was a basic characteristic in some men's lives. These men he condemned to the point of excluding them from the species Man

in a strict sense of the term. He has never been anything but a man of sincere and sympathetic involvement with humanity, however; even at the most sober moments of his philosophy's development, at the crisis between men and tigers, he did not abandon the belief that some "true men" still existed. But in La Puissance du Jour this belief was the limit of his optimism.

His species concept was at that time two-dimensional in two ways. His remarks about man's past and early development were unconvincing as well as scant, and up to and including 1951 his writings expressed also an indecision about man's future and about his right to remain on the earth. Zoo, Sylva, and Les Animaux dénaturés attempted to convince readers of the necessity to define man, suggesting the rebirth of Vercors' optimism for the future. After flatly presenting his belief in the species duality in La Puissance du Jour, in these three later works he encouraged man to examine his kind: he must have thought that some chance of success existed for his admonitions, and also that a continuation of the species was worthwhile. Some of the natural inquisitiveness of true men thus would continue to exist, and to influence all men's actions. This last expressed belief certainly underlies Colères as well; there is even a hint of it in La Puissance du Jour in the speech of the priest who said that man would someday realize the importance of the sacrifices made by prisoners of war like Pierre had been, and would then revere such men.

P.P.C. and Sur ce Rivage presented ways of recognizing and dealing with tigers and although the stories of the latter have tragic elements, these tend to make the lesson on recognition and tactics all the more pointed.

Vercors' species Man is not a biological one; the classification does not depend on any sort of reproductive isolation. It is not morphological, for "tigers" and "men" can resemble each other so closely in all aspects as to be physically indistinguishable. His species is not paleontological in the sense of adding time dimensions in the past: he has not tried to pinpoint the species' first origins. In later years, however, Vercors has added some aspects of time in presenting a hopeful view of the future of the species.

His species Man is not immutable. La Puissance du Jour made it very clear that branches of the species have diverged sharply. These branches have since shown only a slight tendency to re-converge, and that due only to the efforts of the "men" themselves. Many years of conscious labor will be necessary if the two species are ever to merge completely and again become one.

Man, true man in Vercors' sense, is defined on the basis of his innate rebellious nature; the rebellion is directed against ignorance and against the unconscious instinctive behavior of animals. This rebellion is manifested in man's development of, and attitude toward, art, beauty, politics, religion and the sciences. In later years true men also rebelled against their parallel species (parallel in form, not in aim), the "tigers," and they could use "Le Nord" as a guide.

The basic split between the two species into which Man is divided occurs in their opposite treatment of themselves and all humanity: one species is content to use men as a means, the other struggles constantly to achieve and assure that Man, unique in creation, remains an end in himself.

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