

3. CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH: 1898–1914

The official *Acte de Naissance* of the tenth Arrondissement states that Jean Charlot was born in Paris at 1:00 AM on February 8, 1898. February 8 is the date placed on government documents, but February 7 appears with surprising regularity in other documents and in the literature, including Charlot's record at his school, the Lycée Condorcet. The full name given was Louis Henri Jean Charlot: Louis for his grandfather; Henri and Jean for his father, whose full name was Henri Pierre Jean Charlot. Charlot's patron saint was John the Baptist (e.g., Diary August 31, 1924), whereas he named me for John the Evangelist, for reasons discussed later. Henri was thirty-eight years old, and Anne twenty-seven; they were living in the Rue de Bondy, where Charlot was born.¹ Louis Goupil signed the document as well as a Pierre Charlot, thirty-seven years old, who may have been Henri's brother.

Charlot decided early to use the surname Jean; he remembered that he avoided Louis Charlot because there was already an artist of that name. His first signatures with Jean appear in the ledger he used for drawing from approximately 1900 to 1904; by 1905, he is signing with the initial *J*. This indicates either that Charlot had decided to become an artist at an extraordinarily young age or that the family called him Jean to avoid confusion with his father and grandfather and Charlot later kept that name to avoid a further confusion with Louis Charlot. An argument for the former view is that the signatures, at least from 1905 on, are clearly those of an artist formally signing his work. Charlot even develops an artistic signature in 1905 with the initial *J* inside the capital *C* of his last name. Signing with one's full name was more common early in the last century than today. Jean's sister Odette and his school friends sign their full names in their notes and letters to him. Finally, Charlot's childhood self-portraits, starting in 1905, often show him pencil or brush in hand; they are portraits of an artist.

The detail of Charlot's signature is in fact typical of the surviving materials related to his childhood. Charlot was extremely precocious: he began his art-making by the age of two and continued it until his death. The main lines of his personality and career—as well as particular interests and subjects—can therefore be traced back into his earliest years.

Childhood was unusually important in Charlot's thinking and creativity. He recognized in his own life that childhood impressions had influenced his work through the course of his long career, for instance, in his regular themes and subjects:

the psychologists and so on tell you that you have received most of the major impressions that we learn as we go through life when you are, I don't know, two years or four years old. It certainly is true of the painter that there are many things that get bottled up in him to come out later on. (Interview October 1 1970)

In fact, scenes of infancy and childhood occupy an unusually large part of his visual production.

Throughout his life, Charlot remained emotionally close to his childhood. When my father visited Paris in 1968—the first time he had returned after leaving for Mexico in 1921—we walked together to look at the apartment building in the Chaussée d'Antin where he had grown up. I suggested

we climb the stairs and knock on his old door. “I’d be afraid I’d answer it,” he said with a laugh. Many of his childhood papers and artworks survive—first because his parents preserved them and then because after his mother’s death, Charlot carried them along with him in his many travels. In 1931, after a long and momentous stay in Mexico, it was a Paris photograph of a bakery woman delivering bread in her cart by Jean-Eugène-Auguste Atget that inspired Charlot to do his first series of paintings in years with non-Mexican subject matter. He was undoubtedly carried back to the world of his childhood, with its powerful memories and emotions.²

Moreover, Charlot’s childhood experiences were conscious factors in his thinking. In the unpublished paper “Point of View” (n.d.), he describes how at first a small child cannot see over the edge of a table at which men are playing billiards; as he grows, he can see the edge of the table straight on, and then finally, the billiards on top of the table:

Growing up from babyhood in one’s house is dramatized by rising horizon line: i.e., as babies with the floor close to us, we live at ease in cubic spaces under tables, their legs columns, their underbelly our ceiling. (our own, truly ignored by grown ups: cf: the silver I hid in the “rafters” under the belly of our diningroom table. how long it took them to discover the cache.) as we grow up our level just level with the table top both underbelly and top not quite real, one not anymore, the other not yet—cf: tantalized at that age by family playing billiards—nothing to be seen. Further grown tends towards zenithal, eye as sun rising from table level—sense of pride as billiard balls come slowly into natural field of vision—

Charlot remembered that this had happened to him at the billiard table of his grandfather’s country house at Poissy (Tabletalk late September or early October 1976). Charlot had a large number of such early childhood memories—for instance, those of doing particular artworks—which indicates that he was an unusually alert and thoughtful child. His memories of his eye operation—when he was barely a toddler—reveal a complicated social awareness and strong personal reactions, the basis of likes and dislikes that were important influences on his thinking and his art.

Charlot’s attachment to his childhood begins very early in his life. In his first dated poem of April 1912, that is, when he was fourteen years old, he describes his view of his life up to that point. He is losing his beautiful childhood, in which he was young. At the time, he wanted to be an adult, with all the assurance of maturity; now he would like to be a small child again, happy the whole day long. Instead destiny pushes him forward—and he must obey—through the heavy arch through which human beings pass to die:

ma douce âme d’enfant s’échappe à tire-d’aile
me laissant à la nuit
et je comprends combien mon enfance était belle
alors qu’elle s’enfuit.

Je voudrais près de moi la retenir encore

encore un seul instant
tout au fond de moi-même à voix basse j'implore
j'implore doucement.

Je l'ai compris trop tard que l'enfance était belle
quand on disait cela
je pensais que c'était de vieilles ritournelles
et j'aurais voulu, moi

devenir un grand homme à la noire moustache
au regard assuré,
ou bien un bel houzard portant la sabretache
et l'habit azuré.

tandis que maintenant, maintenant, je souhaite
d'être un petit enfant
aux chevaux blonds bouclés, l'âme toujours on fête
et tout le jour content.

Or le destin me pousse en avant et je marche,
obligé d'obéir,
et je vois devant moi s'agrandir la lourde arche
où l'homme passe pour mourir.

'my sweet soul of childhood is swiftly flying away
leaving me to the night
and I know how beautiful my childhood was
now that it is fleeing.

I would like to keep it with me here
a single instant still
deep inside myself, I implore in a low voice
I implore softly.

I understood too late that childhood was beautiful
when people said that
I thought it was just the same old story
I myself wanted

to become a big man with a black moustache

with a steady gaze
or else a glamorous hussar wearing a sabretache
and azure uniform.

but now, now, I want
to be a little child
with blond curls, the soul always on holiday
and happy all the day.

But destiny pushes me forward and I march,
obliged to obey,
and I see before me growing the heavy arch
through which man passes to die.’

Charlot recalls his childhood in other poems and even describes the joy of remembering it in his poem *Le Souvenir*. The joy of childhood could awake in him, as in a poem of May 1915:

Je chantais sans savoir ce qui chantait en moi
Et maintenant voici que le printemps, le mois
De mai s’éveille avec un sourire qui fleure
La sève et je voudrais [que] toute sa force m’effleure
Les yeux fermés, pâmé sous le pommier qui ploie
Laisser mon cœur d’enfant naïf
Sauter de Joie.

‘I sang without knowing what sang in me
And now that spring is here, the month
of May awakens with a smile with scents
Of sap, and I want all its power to touch
My closed eyes, swooned under the bending apple tree
To let my naïve infant’s heart
Leap with Joy.’

Charlot felt that childhood, originality, and artistic creativity were connected. Children were more alive, perceptive, and creative than adults, and their work had the energy of folk art: “este espíritu infantil y sabio, inocente e irónico, cínico y amoroso de Guignol” ‘this spirit infantile and wise, innocent and ironic, cynical and amorous of Guignol’ (1947 *Aguatintas*). The artist had to maintain his connection to his childish talents. One had to become like a little child to enter the kingdom of art as well as the kingdom of heaven:

Looking at the plates, an artist finds visual parallels to sayings too often relegated to a specie of moral salve. “Be like children” applies very well to the fact that stylistically the primitive artist, be he Carolingian or Romanesque, by distortions brought to pass

by simple tools and naïve inventions, makes God present more vividly than the sophisticated artist. Only genius at its highest can match childishness in its conjuration of godhood. (ca. 1970 Rácz)

Charlot would access his childhood to do his work. He told a hilarious story of disturbing people in the reading room of the New York Public Library by murmuring out loud and all-unawares “Chug-chug-chug and puff-puff-puff” while researching the illustrations for *Two Little Trains*.³ When I complained once that my brother Martin was being childish, my father replied simply, “Well, he’s an artist.” In the short remark was an implied criticism of me—so responsible and so unartistic. That is, for Charlot, childhood was not so much a stage towards maturity as a continuing alternative to it or retreat from it. Childhood could therefore threaten our adult values, thoughts, and goals.

The difference between children and adults was most apparent in regard to art. Charlot felt that artistic creativity was an integral part of human nature. All young children are good artists, but very few twelve-year-olds are: “Soon the faith of the child in his own inner world fades” (May 7, 1963). Western society does something terrible to children to destroy their innate artistic talents. Starting from the age of fourteen, Charlot in his poems regrets the passing of childhood and the gradual imposition of adulthood.⁴ Charlot’s own talent was not in fact destroyed because of the way his parents had encouraged and supported his artistic activities. Similarly, Charlot would foster with great discretion and effort the talents he saw in his children and would admire cultures, like the Hawaiian, that nourished artists from childhood:

there *is* a quality in cultures that have been untouched, well, let’s say by Christianity in this sense, which in a way is very similar to the admiration that I think all people that are so-called grown-ups, or people that are old like I am, resent for—not resent, what is it?—reflect when they look at children, children that have an extraordinary quick and complex reaction to things, even though they are so different from grown-ups. And they can be fully as complex within their own world as grown-ups. And it is our business, which isn’t such a good business, I would say, to force them out of that form which is themselves and put them into the form of old men as quick as we can because there is something frightening in innocence, which of course comes out in children. And I think that innocence comes out in the—call it the polity, if you want—of Hawaiian and Polynesian and Melanesian and that...communities before the coming of the Europeans. So there is maybe also perhaps in there a search for lost innocence, a search for what some people try to refer to loosely as a terrestrial paradise, the same search that, for example, brought Gauguin to Tahiti. It may have truly a romantic base, perhaps even little actual provable facts, but nevertheless it has a great interest for people just the way that people say—and I don’t know why they say it—that very old men and very young children can talk to each other easily because both lack the ambitions, the complexities, and so on of the middle-aged civilized man. (Interview September 29, 1975)

The continuing connection to his childhood affected Charlot's personality, which retained the freshness and humor of a beginner in life. Zohmah Charlot once stated that Jean was "the youngest man I know." Charlot was of course perfectly mature, but he thought of himself as young. He tended to date some events too early in his life—like his admission to the Bibliothèque Nationale to study the Goupil Collection—and, in his narrations of them, clearly saw himself as younger than he was. In the early 1960s, he was shocked to realize that he had been asked to address a senior citizens group because they considered him old and on the point of retirement; he had never thought of himself as old. He characteristically turned the point into humor, making the audience laugh uproariously. In fact, into his fifties, Charlot looked younger than his years. Edward Weston called him a boy when he met him in the 1920s, as did D. H. Lawrence (*MMR* 119, 152). In the early 1950s, my sister Ann and I discussed the fact that he was older than the other fathers in the neighborhood, but that he looked fairly young, his hair still black. The shadow side of this youthfulness was a curious area of immaturity. Until late in life, Charlot felt a need for protection or patronage and would be unable to work when the pressure of adult responsibilities became too great. On the other hand, Charlot's self-portraits show him as older than he was—a tendency generally observable in Charlot's portraits. The image is strong without a hint of weakness or need.

3.1.

BODY AND MIND

Art-making is a physical activity, and Charlot wrote often about the role of the body in producing the final result, for instance:

Among the tools of the painter one should include the human body, of which other tools are only a working projection...The diverse sets of muscles that the painter can put to work constitute a diversity of tools in themselves. Thus monumental painting will exercise muscles from the shoulder and elbow that have entirely distinct idiosyncracies from the wrist and finger action of the miniaturist. (Foreword 1941)

Charlot was born with a body that had advantages for an artist.⁵ His nerves were very fine, and he was extremely coordinated, teaching us children how to balance brooms and chairs on our noses and toes. I remember him astonishing us in the 1950s by making a Phrygian cap of two pieces of tissue paper joined by scotch tape; he managed the curves of the hat without crinkling the paper or tangling the tape. Discussing Charlot making paper airplanes, my brother Peter recalled:

how neatly Papa could fold the section of paper he wanted to remove, in order to make the necessary square for the airplane body. Once the fold was made, he'd use the edge of his thumb to make it tight. Then, like magic, he'd tear the page perfectly. (June 29, 1998)

Charlot's fine motor ability is apparent already in his childhood art, like his 1907 book of extremely delicate cutouts pasted onto blue paper, works that required extraordinary coordination in a young boy. Charlot's early drawings display an unusual fineness of detail in an often tiny space, for instance, a 1906 drawing of a motorcar. Charlot could work at an almost microscopic scale without losing control, as he did

in his 1914 copies from the Goupil Collection of Aztec codices and in his 1922 drypoint, *After METAMOPHOSES d'OVIDE* (Morse number 26). I have always admired—and never understood—how Charlot could lay down a series of seemingly parallel lines that suggest volume; he began doing this in childhood. Charlot's consciousness of the physical nature of the hand was revealed in his art historical lectures when he would describe Antoine Watteau's tip-of-the brush method or the flexible wrist needed to accomplish certain cave paintings, a flexibility incompatible, he felt, with the demands made on the arm of a spear-wielding hunter. Charlot recognized the flexible wrist as a peculiar virtue of Chinese artists, which lent quality even to their facile works. Charlot's own work is skillful but never facile.

Charlot thought that he had been born left-handed and had been retrained by the French educational system, which did not provide for exceptions to right-handedness. Thereafter he worked with his right hand, but was either ambidextrous or nearly so. I believe he used both hands while finger-painting some of his last oils. Charlot suspected that he was also dyslexic as a child—dyslexia has afflicted a number of his descendants—but again the French system simply overrode the handicap. Some of Charlot's odd spelling mistakes may have been residual effects of dyslexia.

Charlot had the body of a natural athlete. He was exceptionally limber; when we were small, he taught us how to pull our right hand around the back of our head until we could touch our right ear. His hands were very strong. In the early 1970s, a Hawaiian told me that my frail-looking father had surprised him by nearly breaking his hand when he shook it the first time they met. Charlot had great powers of endurance. The feather cloak of his 1971 ceramic sculpture *Ali'i Nui, High Chief* was made by depressing a large tongue depressor into the wet cement; Charlot was able to continue working at it long after I had tired. During a tour of Italy in 1968, my mother, my first wife, Dominique, and I began to joke about the fact that my father would walk more slowly than we would but would keep going longer. He obviously knew how to pace himself. Even while painting his last fresco, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, in 1978, just months before he died, a television close-up of his hand showed that it was working with perfect steadiness. Indeed, Charlot lived so long despite his cancer because the rest of his body was so healthy.

Sports were an activity expected of young Frenchmen. Charlot rode horses with family members, but felt he never became an accomplished horseman. He did, however, join the horse artillery in World War I. In very early childhood, he invented a horse-head god to which he gave ritual offerings, discussed below. Horses became a major subject of his childhood art and are featured in his first fresco, *Massacre in the Main Temple* (1922–1923), and in his *Cortez Lands in Mexico* in Athens, Georgia (1942). He always appreciated painters who painted horses accurately like Pisanello, Stubbs, and Degas.

Charlot learned to swim, which was unusual at the time (Interview October 13, 1970), and enjoyed riding bicycles with his sister among the trees at the country house at Poissy, still a new and exciting sport (Tabletalk: Charlot to Martin, ca. 1972). Charlot made a serious attempt at fencing—the sport of his grandfather—but because of his incapacity for three-dimensional vision (discussed below), he was unable to place the point of his opponent's rapier and had to abandon the sport. He did, however,

learn enough to teach his sons stances, thrusts, and parries when we were going through our swashbuckler phase.

Charlot did become an exceptional boxer—boxing was a popular sport at the time (Guasco in Agathon 1913: 143)—fighting as a flyweight, first in French kick-boxing, *savate*, and then in nineteenth-century English boxing. On June 9, 1912, he won the scholastic championship in English boxing in the lowest weight class, representing his school, Condorcet. A newspaper clipping, the first on Charlot, states that this was “après un combat disputé” ‘a split or disputed decision.’⁶ He remembered that he had won a championship while in the army, but said that a number of his opponents had failed to appear for their scheduled bouts. When I was studying boxing at about ten years old, I asked my father to practice with me; he was only slightly taller than I was. We went out to the yard and put on the big gloves I owned. I assumed the stance in front of him. After a short, intense pause, he showed a little smile, stepped back on his right foot, and then forward on his left. I suddenly felt myself being covered with lightning-quick, rapid-fire taps from my head to my waist. All I could do was cover up while I was being lightly but rapidly and thoroughly pummeled. He was amazingly fast, but in his early fifties, was easily winded and, as he said, had “lost his punch.” My brother Martin had a similar experience (personal communication, July 25, 1998). One day in the early 1950s, he saw my father returning from work and, thinking to surprise him, ran up behind him and jumped on his back. Charlot turned around so fast that he dislodged Martin and gave him a *savate* kick that landed him sitting on the other side of the road. When he saw it was Martin, he ran up to him very concerned. Through his astonishment, Martin understood that his father had thought someone had been attacking him; “His boxing reflexes were still totally there.”

Charlot always played down his athleticism, but it clearly served him in certain situations. At Condorcet,

perhaps my only *éclat*, my only glory, came when I got into boxing and became one of the champions of boxing in scholarly circles. From then on there was a certain respect on the part of my fellow students and perhaps some of the teachers. (Interview October 22, 1970)

In the army, he was thrown among soldiers of a lower class, who tended to resent upper-middle-class soldiers like Charlot:

However I was never a very good rider, but for some obscure reason, maybe because of my training as a boxer—I was going to say as an athlete, really strictly as a boxer—I could jump on the horse from behind. He was without a saddle, and I jumped from behind on the horse just putting my two hands on his *croupe*, on his behind, and jumping on his back. And that was something that those who couldn’t do it were so astonished. (Interview October 13, 1970)

The jump described was an exercise in French cavalry training, so Charlot’s skill would have been noticed. Charlot also did some practice boxing and then competitive boxing in the army. Charlot was known as a boxer in Mexico; Diego Rivera mentions “su carita de ángel y su cuerpecito de boxeador, peso mosca” ‘his

little angel face and his little boxer body, flyweight.⁷ Siqueiros generalized this to the muralists as a group: “nuestros vigorosos brazos de pintores-boxeadores” ‘our vigorous arms of boxer-painters’ (1977: 196). Watching Charlot climb easily up a sheer cliff out of the cenote at Chich’en Itza, Ann Axtell Morris wrote: “Jean had been boxing champion of his regiment in the French artillery, and so had claim to a strength of arms and shoulders belied by his present profession” (1940: 207). Charlot told me that one day his fellow artists decided they wanted to test him, so they put up the painter Xavier Guerrero to challenge him. Guerrero was about Charlot’s height, but much stockier. He seems however to have had no training in pugilism—a brawler rather than a boxer. They went two or three rounds before stopping. Then Guerrero, “with an Indian’s warrior sense,” faced up to Charlot and challenged, “Is that the best you can do?” Charlot shrugged and turned around to remove his gloves. Behind him, he heard Guerrero fall to the floor, out cold.⁸ Similarly, on March 16, 1924, Edward Weston wrote in his journal: “A bad head: it was considerably jarred last night, boxing with Charlot. He was once an amateur champion in France and certainly knocked me around rather roughly!”⁹

Measured by the army on March 30, 1917, at 1.65 meters or 5’4” tall, Charlot was small by American standards, lower medium by French and Mexican Spanish, and medium by Mexican Indian. I cannot remember him ever referring to his own size, although he mentioned Frank Lloyd Wright’s small body size as a factor in his design scale. He clearly could not think of himself as big, but I do not believe he thought of himself as small. He was not intimidated by size. While my father and I were working on his mural *Calvary* in 1958, the large and brutish Franciscan in charge took Charlot by the shoulders and tried to move him to the side so that they would be facing each other more directly. Charlot slapped his hands away so sharply that the monk was rocked back into a posture of apology. In the late 1950s, while we three sons were walking with my parents, my father joked about his parental authority: “I have only to raise my hand...” As he made the gesture, we three young men cowered, although we were all bigger than he was and had seldom been spanked.

Charlot had both a general and characteristically French sensuousness. Invisible in his visual arts, his sense of smell and taste are revealed as important to him in his living and writings.¹⁰ Smell is closely connected to sexuality in his poems.¹¹ Reflecting Charlot’s preferences, smell differentiates classes—the earthy smell of his wet-nurse against bourgeois perfumes—and cultures—unsoaped Mexico against the deodorized U.S. Although always scrupulously clean himself, Charlot could never understand the gringo’s olfactophobia. Charlot could use smell to articulate esthetics. In Mexico in 1968, he discussed with the artist Ricardo Martínez the latest work of Rufino Tamayo. In the 1920s, the young Tamayo had invited Charlot to view his work. At the time, Tamayo lived in the apartment of his aunt, who had reared him. The apartment was above his aunt’s fruit stand in the main Mexico City market, La Merced, redolent with its many foodstuffs and tortillas for sale and consumption. Charlot had encouraged Tamayo, who went on to international success as a Mexican artist whose work was unusually avant-garde. Charlot felt Tamayo lost something on the way, saying of his latest work, “Me falta el olor de tortillas” ‘I miss the smell of tortillas.’ Charlot’s sense of smell was part of his broad perception and appreciation of life and he was troubled when he thought he might be losing it at the end of his life.¹²

Charlot had a gourmet palate, and a surprising number of his journal notes concern meals. Food was a source of enjoyment that he cultivated. He would seek out local specialties, like Kona coffee in Hawai'i, and enjoyed ethnic restaurants. He had a Frenchman's seriousness about cuisine. I remember him in the early 1950s being indignant and unhappy about an inauthentic Mexican restaurant, saying, "they just got a recipe book." He himself cooked only occasionally, but he was not casual about the result. He once stopped me from putting too much sauce on a fish he had cooked, and was upset when my mother stopped him from cooking pork rinds when the smoke from the oven began to fill the house. Charlot was a *gourmet* rather than a *gourmand*; he took his sensual pleasures within the context of a life that was generally frugal through poverty and an aversion to luxury. But he enjoyed what he had. Charlot characterized the Roman Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain as the exact opposite:

the man was an ascete, an ascetic, and had really an absolute minimum of interest in the senses...he invited me to a lunch, and at the lunch they served me some cold meatballs. And since then every time I remember Maritain, God knows I remember him with much gratitude and love, to that gratitude and love I superpose the picture and the taste of those meatballs, which were absolutely anti-sensuous. (Interview October 10, 1970)

Charlot was French about wine, proud of finding fine wines on sale in Hawai'i because local buyers did not recognize them. During the Occupation of Germany after World War I, he seems to have been in charge of the wine cellar for the officers' mess. Charlot drank slowly and in small quantities; when he would return from work in the early 1950s, he would make himself a martini and have a glass of wine with his food. He could relax and even get boisterous at a party while nursing a single drink. I do not know whether he drank more in Mexico at the wild parties recorded.

Charlot had an unusually fine tactile sense that supplemented his visual in appreciating art. He writes of Aztec sculpture:

this sculpture does not require a spectator. To handle its textures with eyes closed is to gain a knowledge keener than what comes through the eye. It seems that, overlooked in a jungle, it would still breathe a kind of hibernated life like a cocoon, that buried underground it would continue to exude a silent existence like a bulb. (AA II: 16)

Charlot spoke of following a form with his brush as if he were touching the object he was painting, another expression of the contact he felt with his subject. Charlot sensed textures at times with a disturbing intensity. Toward the end of his life, he found he was being made nauseous by the slick oiliness of the surface of coffee. Connected with his fine motor control, this sense enabled him to create a range of tactile sensations in his art. For instance, his black and white lithographs can be smooth, glossy, velvety, shiny, and so on. I remember a curious example of Charlot's sensitivity from the early 1960s: a barber had snipped off two long hairs from his eyebrows, and Charlot complained that it disoriented him and that he felt like an insect that had lost its antennae.¹³

Charlot's cultural blind spot was music. He could recognize the irregular rhythms of Mexican folk music, could appreciate the importance of American jazz (singling out Louis Armstrong as a pioneering genius), and could carry a tune on the rare occasions when he sang. But he could also say that the conductor's job was merely to make showy gestures for the audience. A musical anecdote he told several times interested him because it illustrated a general principle of art: asked if he could express silence, a composer thought a while and then said, "Yes, but I'd need two brass bands."¹⁴

Through most of his life, Charlot enjoyed excellent health. The illness was exceptional that confined him to his room in the summer of 1911, where his cousins found him working (Doly Labadie to John Charlot February 14, 1980), and I remember few times when he suffered even from a cold. Like many basically healthy people, Charlot took his health for granted. His principal physical exercise late in life, walking, was done for pleasure rather than exercise; Charlot never learned to drive and insisted on making the long walk to the bus stop. His dentist complained to me that my father completely neglected his teeth, which required much work whenever, I believe, my mother insisted on making an appointment. This overconfidence often made Charlot a *mauvais malade*, a difficult sick person, during his final years with cancer.

Charlot did appreciate his bodily advantages, calling his artistic talent "ce quelque chose au bout de mes doigts" 'this something at the end of my fingers' (*La pâte est sur la pelle, blanche et malaxée de main de maître* February 1917). But like many Catholics, I believe, he did not feel identified with his body, and as an artist, he judged it a poor expression of his inner self:

This slight uneasiness is, however, not much more than the awkwardness with which I associate with my own body. It often surprises me as a comical stunt to watch my feet burgeoning into toes. My flame-like soul, long and lean as an el Greco, feels small familiarity with the barrel-shaped carcass that my mirror reflects, Don Quixote living inside Sancho Panza. Yet soul and body push along in a kind of amicable compromise, which I hope will be strengthened into positive affection, come eternity, if bodily resurrection is to prove a success. (Summer 1951)

In his 20s, he could describe himself in terms that reveal a negative body image.

Charlot's greatest physical problem as an infant was his eyes.¹⁵ In the earliest photographs of Charlot as an infant and toddler, he is clearly strabismic or, more specifically, cross-eyed. This problem is now treated by exercise. In Charlot's case, the ocular muscles of one of the eyes were severed and resewn or knotted (Charlot himself thought that the optic nerve had been cut, but this would have blinded the eye). In the interview in which he discussed the operation, he downplayed the experience of both the operation and the recuperation; but some years earlier, he had told me that they were extremely painful and that the long confinement to his bed—lying motionless and in pain—was traumatic. At a very early age, he became acutely aware of his vision. Moreover, the possibility of losing his sight must have been frightening. Two days before my father died, he was alarmed when he had difficulties reading the faces of the cards while we were playing bridge. He asked us whether he was reading them correctly and was very relieved when we told him he was. He said he did not want a "tragedy" to happen: he might be

going blind. Similarly, the operation must have given the young Charlot a strong impression of human fragility, perhaps even of death, which plays a prominent part in his early poems.

Charlot described the results of the operation:

one of my eyeballs actually was entirely in, or nearly entirely in, the iris, so I really saw with one eye and a quarter more or less, and I never could focus both eyes on the same thing. So when I was seven years old, the eye that was the worst, the doctors cut the optical nerve, I understand, straightened the eye, and in some way knotted the nerve again so that the eye was straight. So from then on, I could see with both eyes. But I don't think that I've ever been able to focus both eyes on the same thing anyhow because they are both very different in their vision. In the old stereoscopic slides, for example, which is a good test; my grandfather had those stereoscopic slides, and people explained to me that as you see both pictures—there are twin pictures taken from slightly different points of view—you have a sense of depth. Well, I never could see both pictures together. I would look at one, look at the other, and make a sort of mental computation so I could tell grandfather that I saw that sense of depth and stereoscopic vision was wonderful. But I never actually experienced it, and I think in a way, now that you mention that eye operation, I have gone through life lacking that sort of natural triangulation that people have in their eyes if their eyes are entirely normal, and what I have seen are really like stereoscopic twin photographs that are naturally flat, and it's only with an intellectual approach that I can get a sense of depth. This is very good, of course, for painting because painting is really putting that three-dimensional stuff on a flat surface, and I may have been helped there by having bad eyes, so to speak. I think it's a case with quite a number of painters—Matisse was refused for his military service because of his bad eyes. (Interview October 16, 1970)

In the interview of November 18, 1970, he stated:

I'm not an oculist. But the eyes after the operation—of course, before the operation, one of the eyes didn't see very much because the eye was under the lid; I simply didn't see very much from that eye. So my other eye was trained to see everything by itself, like a one-eyed person. And when they cut and repaired the optical nerve on the eye that couldn't see and it could see in its turn, it had another age as far as training goes than the other eye, and they never got together. That is, I see through one eye or through the other. And with a sort of intellectual arrangement, I can pretend I see the same thing with both eyes at the same time, but it's not the physical truth. And then I am just shortsighted with one eye and farsighted with the other. So that's about it, plus something which I haven't read anywhere but is obvious is that one of my eyes must be a little closer to color blindness than the other one. One of my eyes sees, well, rather soft colors—I wouldn't say variations of gray but tending

to variations of grays—and the other eye sees rather excitingly colors that tend to be what we could call rainbow colors. So my eyes are a mess, even though I don't have any terms to describe them, and I think that helped me a lot to realize the difference between nature as a reality and nature as a spectacle, as a visual spectacle. That is, from the point of view of a painter, it continuously has raised problems that for other people perhaps are just intellectual exercises, but they are not for me. I know that what I see in nature are images and not the reality of nature. And that's pretty good for painting because painting is also making an image, not presenting a reality.

The results of the operation were, I believe, important for his work. First, Charlot was never capable of true binocular vision or depth perception. This handicap had an obvious impact on his style, notably in those pictures in which the background is treated as a geometric design almost parallel to the picture plane, while depth is created by the three-dimensional modeling of the figures. Sculptural quality was one of the only ways Charlot could sense depth:

If you see one-half of volume on which you have enough naturalistic reference, let's say like the human body, you automatically imagine the other half, in which case your imagination takes the person represented as in the round, and it is that unseen half, like the dark side of the moon, if you want, which we see exists, that suggests space because to exist it needs a space, a sort of a niche of space. (Interview October 16, 1970)

Moreover, each of Charlot's eyes had a different type of vision. In one, his sight was very sharp, but the colors, though present, were very light, in fact, almost tones. In the other eye, the colors were unusually vivid, but the focus was weak. He described this difference in an interview:

the sense of color is very different with each one of my eyes. I can, of course, compare what I see with one eye, what I see with the other one, but there is a tremendous difference of intensity of color. One eye tends, well, to put it in easy terms, to pure color, and the other eye tends to grays. Now I understand, I don't really believe it, but people who have studied the eyes, for example, of dogs and cats and fish say that they have no sense of color, and maybe one of my eyes is closer to a dog's eye. And I don't know what the other one is: it's extremely keen on defining color in terms of strength. So this at least suggests to me the difference between nature as is—there must be a nature as is—and nature as we perceive it, and I know that the painter deals in illusion. (Interview October 16, 1970)

The less color-sensitive eye was the one that was operated on. Charlot's Hawai'i ophthalmologist, Dr. Worldster Lee, commented that Charlot had:

possibly a "lazy" eye also. Not unusual for cross-eyed children to have a lazy eye especially if the surgery was at age of 7 (late) and if he had no patching before and after surgery.

A lazy eye is one that habitually fails to focus sharply, leaving that effort to the other eye. Patching is placing an eye patch over the stronger eye to force the lazy eye to work. From his work on my father's elderly eyes, Dr. Lee noted: "Note: Differences in color in either eye are common. In your father's case—it may have been due to cataracts which very often is worse in one eye."

Curiously, the differences between Charlot's eyes reproduce the debate in French art history between the Poussinists, advocates of line, and the Rubenists, champions of color. Like other artists and critics,¹⁶ Charlot felt this was a false controversy, but much of his art can be described as an exploration of the relationship between line and color. Indeed, much of Charlot's childhood art is an alternation of emphasis on one or the other until he reaches a comfortable balance. In his mid-1960s series, *Tying Child to Chair*, Charlot traced the same outline drawing onto a set of canvases (imitating his fresco technique of incising the key lines into the wet mortar) and then colored each one differently. In this series, the color often works against the line: the cloth wrapped around the child is drawn three-dimensionally, but its strong and uniform color acts to preserve the two-dimensional picture plane. Similarly, the difference between tones and colors was unnaturally important in Charlot's vision; he stated in an interview: "At the bottom of everything, I think the translation of value into color is the real problem that I've tried to tackle all my life, and I have succeeded to an extent" (November 18, 1970). Charlot would use color expressively and unnaturally throughout his life. Finally, Charlot's eyes were very light-sensitive; he would usually wear a visor to shield them against whatever light source he was working near.

The physical character of Charlot's eyes must not be pressed as an explanation for his style. He himself ridiculed such an attempt:

There is a Spanish book by someone I would call a mad doctor of optics. He found that all the great masters were very sick in their eyes, which is why they painted the way they did. For example, he explains that Rubens had a defect in his eye that made him see all the horizontal lines longer than they really were. So the doctor corrects those spherical heads of Rubens — by photographing them from the side — to show that he was not a madman who saw everybody fat. In the same way, the doctor corrects El Greco. Then he takes a Rubens and makes an El Greco out of it, and takes an El Greco and makes a Rubens out of it; and he is very happy that way. (Disney lectures, May 17, 1938)

Nonetheless, as is clear from the above quotations, Charlot's problematic vision was as important for his philosophy of art as for his practice; it convinced him of the artificial character of human vision:

I am rather grateful because not only it hasn't been a hindrance in painting, but it has been an asset to be able to distinguish between nature and nature as we apprehend it by sight. (Interview October 16, 1970)

Charlot's problematic vision forced him to look not only at objects, but at the way he looked at them; that is, reflexivity was inescapable. A principle of Charlot's philosophy of art is that vision itself is as artificial

as it is natural and the representation of vision in art is conventional. Italian perspective was no more natural than architectural renderings; Charlot often quoted a teacher who described Italian perspective as the view of a man with his head nailed to a wall and one eye poked out. To confuse representation with reality or to present representation as reality was a cardinal esthetic sin. Charlot deliberately ensured that his own work could not be taken as literally representational. He also preferred styles and means that made it impossible for the viewer to be misled. For instance, he worried that people were confusing photographs of artworks with the artworks themselves; he preferred the old method of “reproducing” artworks by means of drawings with lines of varying thickness: “Thick-thin line reproductions have a true relation to the original but don’t pretend to be the original.”¹⁷ Moreover, because art representations are conventional, they must be challenged and changed; a major means of doing this is to confront the esthetic conventions of one culture with those of another. This was in fact one of Charlot’s major concerns and methods throughout his life. Furthermore, seeing is connected to thinking: the way we see something is the way we think about it. Studying the art of another culture leads us into its thought world. Changing the image of, say, the poor, makes people think about them in a different way. Art is therefore a means of questioning and revalorizing: art has the mission of making people see and thus think differently.

Despite or perhaps because of his problems with vision, Charlot was an unusually intense observer. He looked passionately and acutely at the world and found it beautiful. He spoke several times of the beauty of the oil or gas lamps that were common in his house (he draws one in *Juvenilia* 1904: 91a verso). The intensity of their light could be varied. “You can’t do that with your electric lights,” he told me. Moreover, the lamps had faceted glass or crystal bowls that refracted the light; Charlot remembered looking for long periods at their prismatic effects, just as he studied the reflections on the Seine at Poissy, a Monet site.

Charlot considered observation the basis of his art: “nature remains the great instructor of the artist, and if we do without nature, the chance is that we’re going to fall on our nose”; “It seems to me I would lose so much, again, if I didn’t hug very closely the natural, call it phenomena” (Interview August 7, 1971); “I mean seeing is the biggest influence. The big influence is nature as it comes to the artist through his eye” (Interview November 12, 1970); “And I think at the bottom of it, it comes from an uneasy feeling I have that nature in itself is a sort of a great instructress of art. That is that if you look again at nature, you will get strength in questions of style and of art” (Interview August 7, 1971). Edward Weston agreed that nature “was then as now, the great stimulus.”¹⁸

Unlike many modern theorists, Charlot felt that direct personal observation was possible; that is, one could see an object without cultural preconceptions and predispositions. In my own thinking, Charlot’s practice resembled Zen Buddhist methods of freeing a person to be able to observe and experience beyond the mediation, and even determination, of received cultural views. Similarly, the Hawaiian composer of place chants and songs acknowledges the earlier perceptions of a place, but moves beyond them to express his own. Man-made culture is too limited to cover the infinity of nature, so a gap opens between an individual’s perceptions and experiences and the culture in which he has been reared. Most people retreat into their cultural categories, into the simplification of reality provided by their society’s general view. The artist faces the inadequacy of his tradition and accepts the validity of his own

experience. Personal observation is inevitably individual, not group, and thus provides a basis for originality and creativity. The artist can express a new vision because he sees in a new and different way; thus “Nature, more than man, has mothered all styles” (*AA I*: 66); “Nature is at the base of all the great styles; it is the common denominator between periods and personalities whose variety would otherwise seem unbridgeable” (“College Art Teaching” 1951). Then as a social being, the artist enters into a creative dialog with his tradition. Charlot recognized such an attitude in other artists as seen in his discussions of Maya artists:

The work is technically inferior to the best work of similar subjects in the Maya area. But what it lacks in workmanship or in dignity it gains in freedom. The artist evidently enjoyed his work. His close observation of personages is ingenious and shrewd. It is true that the lack of a theoretical canon of beauty makes his work little fitted to embody, as of old, an impersonal collective feeling, but his more individual outlook on the world led him to fresher and unexpected realizations, especially in portraiture. (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 265)

the elegant proportions and tendency to artistic theorizing point to a stage of development at which this art grows more distant from life and actual observation, but one which, nevertheless, has not yet reached the point of decadence. (321)

new qualities appear, one of the most conspicuous of which is an emphasis on character which in some cases reaches caricature. This intensity, however, is not the result of comic intent, but of an eager desire to record, in their original strength, the features of the model. (342)

The Mexican transformed his model into a new form that retained only a few points of contact with natural appearances. In Chichen, on the contrary, a most exact love of nature predominated. (343)

The habit of personal observation and community dialog should continue throughout the artist’s life. Nature is infinite; there is always more to observe. Thus in his early artworks and writings in Mexico, Charlot shows himself to be completely open to new impressions, which would stimulate a new stylistic search. Charlot felt that artists who base their work on observation have a great late period in their art, whereas artists who base their work on other artworks, like Picasso, tend to decline. In his “Notes sur des Artistes Grecs” of 1921 or 1922, Charlot quoted the opinion of a Greek artist: “c’était la nature, et non aucun artiste qu’il fallait imiter” ‘it was nature and no artist that should be imitated.’ Similarly, Weston argued that the artist should base his work on Brancusi’s source, nature, not Brancusi’s work (1966: 242).

Charlot’s view of observation implied a real contact with the object being observed, a contact Charlot felt keenly. He pitied abstractionists, who never experienced the pleasure of rounding oil paint with the brush to describe an ear; “Todo artista de veras encuentra recreación y deleite en hacer arte” ‘Every true artist finds recreation and delight in making art’ (Charlot May 9, 1946). Charlot immersed

himself in his contact with the object he was painting. Reworking a nude portrait of Zohmah Day in 1932, he wrote her:

I am still working that funny nice picture of you as a circle. I never did work a picture so much before, and I begin to think it is not so much to paint as to pat your back that I do it. I think it is one of my best things, by now.

I am still working on it. It is like talking to you—¹⁹

Charlot's tactile relationship with his subject probably explains why he did so many female nudes and so few male: in his writings he describes the female body as the most beautiful thing imaginable, but the male as repulsive:

C'est vrai, mon Dieu, les hommes si laids, mal rasés,
Avec des poils au cervelet et l'âme en langes
et puis La femme : du Chérubin l'embrassé
et ce logique instinct qui l'approche de l'ange.²⁰
'It's true, my God, these men so ugly, badly shaven,
With a few hairs on the cerebellum and the soul in diapers
and then The Woman: the flaming of a Cherubim
and this logical instinct that brings her close to an angel.'

In his latest oils, Charlot would sculpt the image with his fingers. Charlot's tactile relationship to the object reveals his response to the universe: wonder, reverence, and love.

The particular subject of a picture was unusually important for Charlot, exciting and inspiring him. This can be seen in the contrast between his two "Planiste" gouaches of 1921: *Music*, a subject of limited emotional interest for Charlot, is an exercise, whereas *Bullet*, based on his war experience, is a powerful personal statement. Charlot's creation of original subjects or themes is thus central to his work. In contrast, a subject could repulse Charlot, even unconsciously, to the point that he was unable to portray it. In New York City in the 1930s, the art dealer Joseph Duveen, probably pushed by Paul Claudel, offered to promote Charlot and asked him to paint a sample portrait of a fashionable woman in a bare-shouldered evening dress. Encouraged, Charlot went happily to work only to find himself incapable of producing the required subject. Puzzled and embarrassed, he avoided Duveen whenever he spotted him in the street.

Charlot's relationship with the subject clearly went beyond the traditional French tendency to "save the subject." He usually had to study—or even live with—an object for a while before he felt he was ready to paint it: "I'm rather slow at getting the hang of things, perhaps slower with the forms and colors than I am with words" (Interview May 14, 1971). When in 1968 he painted two oils for my apartment in Munich, I suggested several subjects, but he said he wanted to do ones that were "at the tip

of his fingers.” That is, once he had developed a subject, he could concentrate on its treatment without other considerations.

Charlot’s relationship to a subject could be severed. While in Bali, he made a small oil sketch of a temple figure. When it was stolen, he found he could not continue working on Balinese subjects; the little painting was to be his entrée.

Art for Charlot was thus an authentic exploration of reality:

Art is not something that is a frosting on the cake. It is really a way of investigating the world, and we know that the report that the painter makes of the universe is fully as important as are the reports made by great scientists.²¹

Science, philosophy, and art are on the same quest. An indication of this is that each, in its own way, finds beauty essential. In G. H. Hardy’s famous statement:

The mathematician’s patterns, like the painter’s or the poet’s must be *beautiful*; the ideas, like the colors or the words, must fit together in a harmonious way. Beauty is the first test: there is no permanent place in the world for ugly mathematics.²²

In mathematics “as a creative art,” Hardy finds “a very high degree of *unexpectedness*, combined with *inevitability* and *economy*,” virtues appreciated in the Classical visual arts (1967: 113, 115). To these he adds *generality* (“capable of considerable extension” [104]) and *depth* (penetrating downwards through more “strata” of mathematics [109–112]). Again he could be speaking of art.

Since art is investigation, we can see that Daumier’s geometric style was not fabricated and imposed by him on his subjects; it arose from “his heightened visual experience” (Charlot 1980: 59). Unity of style had to be achieved to express the unity of reality, which was ultimately the unity of God’s creation. The artist sees and expresses a rich reality, as Charlot wrote of Edward Weston: “there is a mystery in the objective realm as loaded with meaning as are the voyages that one makes into oneself” (September 1933: 1). Meaning is not a symbolist imposition on the universe; it is meaningful as God’s creation. Charlot saw this specifically artistic perception from children’s art to the most sophisticated: “For a child, an idea can be of more substance than an object”; the child and the Greek artist, modeling his figures on an ideal “attain a clarity dissociated [*sic*] from facts, at least from facts as the non-artist understands them” (September 14, 1966).

Charlot often said that art makes visible the invisible. The artist is seeing a reality unseen by others. An artwork is, therefore, valuable. Charlot could express this point in terms taken from Delacroix: nature is an alphabet for the artist, who arranges its elements to communicate a message:

du rôle du peintre : aboucheur entre Dieu et L’homme : homme : lui reproduire les éléments naturels : alphabet.

Dieu : organiser cet alphabet en phrases à sa gloire, non suivant nous-même mais dans l’obéissance à son plan.

cf : le maçon ordonne les pierres dans l'obéissance—et son résultat est conforme au plan qu'il ignore (1920–1925: *Journal de Méditations*, June 2, 1920)

on the role of the painter: the connector between God and Man: for Man: to reproduce for him the natural elements: alphabet.

for God: to organize this alphabet in sentences to his glory, not following ourselves but in obedience to his plan.

Compare: the mason orders the stones in obedience—and his result conforms to the plan that he does not know.

Charlot, however, did not place art above nature as Louis I. Kahn seemed to do when he says, “Truly a work of art is one that tells us that nature cannot make what man can make” (Nathaniel Kahn 2004). Rather art was dependent on the richer reality observed: “once understood Our Lord’s saying that the lily of the field is clothed in more splendor than Solomon in all his glory, the seed of aesthetic wonder will be sown...” (*AA I*: 282). Man’s creation could not compete with God’s. The artist also should feel his dependency on and inadequacy before the universe he observes and depicts: “Picasso was one who had never been humbled by nature.”²³ On the other hand, since the artist is indeed seeing something—and not just imposing his prideful fantasy—he is justified in his work and has the right to defend his vision.

Art-making itself was indeed an integral part of Charlot’s observation. The wonder he felt toward art was similar to the wonder he felt toward the world: “that realization that you could put things and people on paper astonished me” (Interview September 14, 1970). He described a child artist exploring the world:

The components of children’s art are no different from those of any other art. Elements of self-expression and elements of story-telling mingle. At times they may be at odds.

Self-expression may be compared to one engaged in talking to oneself. Storytelling implies an audience and may be summed up in adult terms as communication.

Contemporary pedagogues have emphasized expression over communication. In so doing they follow the way marked by a number of “isms” descended from the granddaddy of them all, expressionism.

In teaching art to children, the expressionist slant is not all to the bad. It underlines for them the reality of this mysterious island that is the inner self. There is a kingdom all their own, where neither parent nor teacher is allowed to trespass.

Modern ways of teaching, however, have neglected one of the essential functions of art. Art is a means of investigating the outer world, a means for knowledge at least as powerful as words.

To draw from life, be it a bird or a rabbit is, for the child, to learn about the bird and the rabbit at first hand. The child is conscious of this fact.

If need be, outside the classroom and in spite of their enlightened teachers, children will plumb the nature of form and color, give substance to natural or epic images, follow the transformations of the anthill and cloud, attempt portraits.

In so doing, they absorb some of the balance and some of the logic inherent in their subject matter. They learn what wisdom of forms and colors exists in the outside world. (June 22, 1966)

That he was referring to his own experience in the above description is clear from a poem he wrote in July 1914, *La fraîcheur paisible des cieux*, mourning the loss of his childhood freedom because of the responsibilities of school. The peaceful freshness of the skies calms our worries. But:

savourer l'heure est impossible.

Le Travail attend, impassible.

'to savor the hour is impossible.

Work waits unmoved.'

In the young soul and body is a desire for beauty, but it must now fast. One would like to pick flowers along the cool banks of streams, smell the water plants, and push one's hands under the smooth leaves. One would like to rest one's feet from the long paths and calm one's head with an infant's blank thoughts.

mais le travail infatigable

nous amène à la même table

'but indefatigable work

leads us to the same table.'²⁴

Similarly, in *Un long et lourd regret a fait de moi sa chose* of November 1913, he writes:

Un long et lourd regret a fait de moi sa chose

depuis que le travail journalier m'a pris,

.....

Je ne m'attarde plus à l'extase des roses,

vaque et coudoie, au long des trottoirs gris.

J'écris sur de l'algèbre et de la prose...

'A long and heavy regret has overcome me

since this daily work has taken me,

.....

I no longer linger in an ecstasy with the roses,

go about my business, elbowing my way along the gray sidewalks.

I write about algebra and prose...'

An important lesson of observation was that the world and its physical objects are infinitely complicated and as such cannot be described exhaustively in art. The artist is forced to simplify, which demands analysis, selection of elements, and means of representation; that is, the problem of style is raised the moment production begins. Charlot's own work oscillated or "pulsated" between an emphasis on observation with analysis and one on synthesis; or, in other words, "between style and nature" (Interview August 7, 1971). As he grew older, he felt that his youth had been an important time of observation and that his old age was moving into greater synthesis. In our interview of October 16, 1970, I asked him whether he had noticed any change in his vision from his youth:

I don't know. I don't think so. I was at the oculist's maybe two months ago, and the guy was very eager to try a new machine, a very expensive one obviously, by which he can pressurize your eyeballs and then see the elasticity. It seems that that shows the, I would say, the age of your eyeball, and he promised me that my eyeballs were absolutely elastic and youthful. And besides that elasticity of the eyeballs, I haven't seen anything in my eyes or through my eyes that is different from what I saw when I was young. There is, however, a sense of synthesis perhaps that comes as one grows older, coupled with a lack of quick curiosity about things seen. That is, I have seen many more things and many more times than I did when I was very young, so the analysis, if you want, is weakened and the synthesis is strengthened. And I suppose that is what shows in some of my later pictures that are somewhat different from my younger pictures and show a different approach. It's not a physical approach through the eye. It's really a mental approach.

Analysis and synthesis were, however, strongly and inevitably operative in Charlot's observation; he always had a very personal view of the world and perception of it.

One reason Charlot emphasized personal observation as the basis of art was that he felt that art historians—and I myself in particular—overemphasized artistic influences. Both he and my mother felt that I had reduced him to a collection of influences in my "The Theme of the Body in the Work of Jean Charlot" (1983). Influences from other artworks are comparatively easy to identify and thus have become a standard part of art scholarship, indeed a cornerstone of its methodology. In contrast, the process of an artist's personal observation and perception of the world and his responding creativity is inaccessible except in the originality of his works themselves. However, that observation is the indispensable basis for any true visual originality and creativity.

Charlot observed artworks as acutely as he did nature. To the surprise of the great cataloguer, Peter Morse, he found an uncatalogued Daumier section in a collaborative print. He spotted an Oceanic fern statue in a print of a Paris student atelier and revealed an unidentified portrait of Kamehameha I on a sheet of drawings by Louis Choris.²⁵ He often said that most people did not really look closely at pictures. He pointed out to me in Goya's *The Family of the Infante Don Luis de Borbón* (1783) that the man on the extreme right is going to put a bribe into the backwards held hand of the man next to him; the bribe-taker looks at the viewer with embarrassed surprise, as if he'd just been caught at it, a kind of sneak

photograph before its time. Just as personal observation of nature authorized Charlot to innovate stylistically, so his intense observation of art gave him confidence in his judgments. My brother Martin said that our father had to trust his own judgment to recognize the then unknown Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada. In evaluating artists, most people just go along with the crowd. Similarly, in perhaps the low point of his neglect, the early 1950s, my father told me that he knew enough art history to make accurate judgments, and he judged that he himself was in fact a great artist.

Connected to Charlot's acute observation was his good visual memory. He seemed to have an absolute recall of the pictures he had seen in his long study of the history of art. He did not have a photographic memory for the wording of texts, but he could find them very quickly because he remembered the layout and general location of a page. At a party, we once played a game that we were told had been started in art circles: to make blindfolded a line drawing of a pig. The challenge was to bring the line around so that the end would touch the beginning: Charlot's met the beginning and just slightly overlapped it.

Artistic images were implanted deep in Charlot's memory and emerged in surprising ways: "It certainly is true of the painter that there are many things that get bottled up in him to come out later on" (Interview October 1, 1970). He himself was surprised when he discovered the similarity between his subject of the Hawaiian drummer and the depictions of Aztec drummers that he had seen as a child:

in the thing that I am doing now, that series of Hawaiian drummers, I found that the gestures and so on, which I thought were inspired by some of the engravings in the eighteenth-century report of Cook where he has some people, not in Hawai'i, incidentally, but in the Cook Islands, I think, with drums that I liked to represent and with the gestures I liked to represent, were identical with some of the Aztec drummers that are in some of the codices; some of them in the codices, of course, of my uncle, Eugène Goupil. And others had been reproduced in the color lithograph facsimile reproductions of the Sahagún, which I have also. So that it's quite possible that there is a superposition there of the two main themes that I have used, that is, the Mexican Indian and the Hawaiian drummer. Those things happen, I think, all the time to an artist, and you will find them if you look at the Old Masters: that two or three themes get all mixed up together. It's not a question of geography. I was, myself, interested in recognizing suddenly in the Hawaiian drummer the gesture of the Aztec drummer and in the Hawaiian drum, which I like very much as an object—it can be very beautiful—something very similar to the *teponaztli* of the Aztec.²⁶

When I said it was odd that he had never made a subject of Aztec drummers, he replied: "No, it isn't odd because things get bottled up into one and come out at a certain time, sometimes in another way." Similarly, a passage of time was often needed between Charlot's first encounter with an artist or school and his focus on and use of the impression it made.

Images seen earlier could emerge in more disturbing ways. When Charlot's father had his nervous breakdown and was lying in bed during his final illness, a number of uncomfortable images arose

in Charlot's mind, which he recorded. On the verso of *Portrait of Henri Charlot Sick, in profile*, September–October 1914, Charlot drew a strange, long-legged, formally clothed being. The image is a transformation of the already strange illustration by Maurice Sand in George Sand's *Histoire du Vêritable Gribouille* (1851: 28), a book Charlot knew as a child.

In his statements on art, Charlot emphasized observation and the mental processes based on it, analysis and synthesis. His descriptions of artists at work, like Daumier, are empathetic (1980: 83, 86). But Charlot's imagination—abundantly evident in his childhood drawings, humor, and sense of fun—was frighteningly strong: “the reality of this mysterious island that is the inner self. There is a kingdom all their own, where neither parent nor teacher is allowed to trespass.” Throughout his life, that imagination could reveal itself in disturbing ways. In his 1917 poem on entering the army, *La mort acceptée*, he asks: “et moi je vais rejoindre ces faces sans nez—ces yeux pourris” ‘and I myself am going to join those noseless faces—those rotted eyeballs.’ When we were painting the ceiling of *Our Lady of Sorrows and Ascension of Our Lord* (1961), someone almost dropped a tool on the expensive green marble of the altar below; Charlot said, “Do you want me to be in debt all my life?” When he read the newspaper report of the accidental death of a blind university colleague, Jacques Luysseran, he remarked, “It must be terrible to be a blind man in a burning car.”

Charlot's dreams were vivid. At a dinner with a psychiatrist in the early 1960s, he recalled dreaming as an adolescent of leaving his bed, going down to the servants' quarters, and pounding with both fists on the door of the maid's bedroom. Throughout his life, he would have disturbing dreams, for instance, soft unattractive faces pressed up to his. He described a dream of August 18, 1923 (*Notebook C*), in which the death of his uncle Aristide Martel was performed as a Greek drama: “mais le *masque*, n'est pas de mon oncle mais le mien” ‘but the *mask* wasn't of my uncle, but mine.’ His dreams could also be involving. While I was assisting him on the 1958 fresco *Compassionate Christ* on Kaua'i, he and I shared a hotel room. One morning, he lingered in bed, rather than getting right up. When I asked him why, he said he had been dreaming of doing a fresco with the subtlest, most beautiful colors. I said I thought those of the *Compassionate Christ* were among his best. “These were *much* better,” he said, and lay a little longer thinking about them.

Around 1911, when Charlot was thirteen, he went through a period when his dreams were continuous; that is, he could take up at night the dream he had awakened from in the morning. He then found that he could control his dreaming, make “scientific experiments” with them, creating situations in order to experience them. For instance, he wondered what it would be like to have his head cut off and then visit his family and friends holding it under his arm. He said they were surprised to see him. He would make himself dream of jumping off high buildings. He found himself being drawn ever more strongly into his dream world and detaching himself from his family and friends to return early to bed. One day, he mentioned them to his uncle Luis Labadie, while they were riding horses together in a park; Labadie reacted violently, saying, “That's impossible, young man!” Charlot decided to stop and was happy he did. He felt he was becoming too engrossed in his dreams and did not know where he would stop.²⁷ The only other time I know he had continuous dreams was towards the end of his life:

JC said that for some months now all of his dreams involve living in a *pensione* and the silly, embarrassing things happening to him there. For instance, he arrives and finds he has to play a role in a play and hasn't memorized his part. All the dreams are like that. (Tabletalk April 4, 1978)

Continuation of continuous dream he's having of being in a sort of *pensione*: he's going into gymnasium where "Body Encounters" were announced. He found it was people lying on top of each other, but they'd fallen asleep!

He said, "Anyway, I walk very well in my dreams, I must say." [He's having trouble with his walking now.] (Tabletalk Early April 1978)

Charlot was acutely aware of the destabilizing power of such an imagination. In his column on children's art, he speaks of observation as an antidote:

Art as a means of investigation can be an important stabilizer.

For a while long ago I taught art in a private school. One of my students was a mentally retarded girl in her teens. I put her to copy simple objects. Her concentration on something else than self bore fruit. Her simplicity stood her in good stead. She did some lovely work and achieved in so doing a modicum of happiness.

Alas, this was a progressive school. It's director overruled me. The girl was forbidden to copy the model. From now on her inspiration was to come strictly from inside.

Her insides were empty. My poor student relapsed into a melancholic void.

Progressive in this case was not synonymous with progress.²⁸

In his poem *Philosophie* of July 1914, Charlot wrote:

le sot travaille et le fou pense
le corps halète et se dépense
la "raison" butte au gouffre noir

et tout l'azur splendide éteint nos désespoirs

the dumb man works and the madman thinks
the body pants and spends itself
the "reason" tries to fill the black pit

and all the brilliant blue covers our despairs'

Also, the outside world could stabilize the inside one through attention to craft:

in my own case, that stabilization is acquired by craft from the beginning, from the earliest things I wrote. In fact, in my teens—you have seen the texts—I always compare the artist to the craftsman, for example, to the man who does penny sheets

and so on. And the craft is stabilizing. I think that's why I do like prints. The *Way of the Cross* I've been working on now in the new edition, for example, was a question of liking to cut with a knife *bois de fil*, that is, just like the most primitive of artists. And that is a stabilization because the material has no fancy of its own. It has its own rules, and you have to abide by the rules. (Interview April 2, 1978)

I believe that his emphasis on observation, his productivity, and his religious devotion were, among other things, stabilizers to his imagination. He wrote Anita Brenner in the mid-1920s, when he was feeling unusually low: "I work hard and when working am in a perfect equilibrio. Afuera del trabajo, nearly desequilibrado" 'I work hard and when working am in a perfect equilibrium. Outside of work, nearly unbalanced' (May 3, 1925); "I painted three little pictures..and regained a little self-confidence. I feel so utterly helpless when I don't create something" ("I did not answer right quick"). Weston reported: "Jean is a prolific worker. 'I am never happy unless I am working,' he said..." (1961: 103). In the same way, Charlot's sense of physicality and practicality, his concentration on work and productivity, grounded his interest in religious mysticism, as described below.

Later, Charlot made a study of the relation of art to insanity, reading Jean Vinchon's *L'Art et la Folie*.²⁹ Interest was great in the art of the insane at the time with large collections and exhibitions; for instance, the poet and critic Apollinaire worked with Vinchon.³⁰ Charlot himself never felt that madness was an advantage for the artist; mental illness crippled an artist's work just as it did his emotions. Art required all the artist's strength, which included health. He said that when you see the last paintings of Van Gogh, you know he has only to shoot himself.

The extreme of human sensibility—as differentiated from religious mysticism—was psychic ability, which Charlot recognized in several of his colleagues, especially in their powers of prediction: including Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and Earl Morris, an archeologist at Chich'en Itza. Charlot felt that Graham Greene must have had such abilities to predict so accurately the course of the Vietnam War in *The Quiet American*. Charlot thought that such psychic abilities could be found in the women of his family but that he did not possess them himself. In my own view, Charlot was like Robert Louis Stevenson (John Charlot 1987). Their ability was an extraordinary receptivity that operated on many levels, including the unconscious. As a result, both were able to feel their way into a different culture to the point where they could perceive and even predict elements about which they had not been told. The natives of the culture with which they were dealing recognized this unusual ability in them and treated them as they would one of their own religious experts. The phenomenon of the unconscious psychic is found in Hawaiian culture: a Hawaiian minister described at a meeting how he deals effectively with problematic ghosts even though he does not himself perceive them in any way.

Charlot was fascinated by mental processes and the various ways in which they revealed themselves, for instance, in stream of consciousness. Charlot read Proust, but also the police stenographer's transcription of John Dillinger's unconscious ramblings as he lay dying. In Hawai'i, he took us to a show by a hypnotist, even though the Catholic authorities had a public warning against it. My father explained to us that according to church teaching, one should not transfer one's will to

someone else, which seemed to happen in hypnotism. A danger also existed that the hypnotist might not be able to bring the subject back from his hypnotized state. That Charlot attended nevertheless—and took us children—reveals his interest in the topic. His only complaint was that the hypnotist had embarrassed his subjects. I suspect that Charlot had a special interest in hypnotism that he never explained.

Because from earliest childhood Charlot experienced personally the process of artistic creation, he was particularly interested in the psychology of art and regularly used introspection in his writings on art (e.g., *AA* I: 100). One of his unrealized projects was in fact a description of the artistic process for which he would have used his own introspection: “I really thought I could paint a picture and describe what was going on inside of me at the same time.” Unfortunately, the grant he requested for that purpose from the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton was refused. The plan reveals, however, that Charlot felt he could compartmentalize his mind like multitasking in computers. Already in his continuous dreaming, a part of Charlot’s mind had been in a dream state while another part had been observing and controlling the dream. Charlot’s ability to compartmentalize his mind helps explain one aspect of his artistic work: he was able to maintain the initial inspiration of an artwork and control its application through the sometimes lengthy period of its realization.

Charlot was aware of the different mental factors of artistic creation because he felt them very practically in his own work: different genres required different mental activities or different degrees of them. That is, he could not paint oils (and sometimes watercolors) when he was suffering from stress or the overwhelming demands of job and family.³¹ He could, however, create artworks in which intellectual factors were more important: prints, frescoes, and so on. He painted his oils almost entirely out of the unconscious creating mind: planning and craft were absorbed almost entirely into that spontaneous creative movement. Larger or more complicated projects interposed a number of steps between the idea or the inspiration and the completion of the project. Those steps involved intelligence, planning, knowledge, and craft, and required time, for instance, for grinding pigments. The challenge was to keep the inspiration alive as the steps were traversed. He felt that the delay between his conception of the monumental ceramic statue *Ali'i Nui* (1971) and its fabrication had been too long, and as a result, he had had to “reconstruct” the original idea rather than express it. Charlot liked the larger multistep projects precisely because they involved more aspects of the mind than oils; the results seemed more fully human. As he wrote in 1945, “the muralist must find the outlet for his personality mostly in intellectual planning.” Charlot also disliked the modern privileging of purely inspirational gestural art; the connected idea of artist as pure genius was opposed to Charlot’s view of the artist. Many art genres require lengthy realization, like moviemaking, and the artistic process involved in such works has not been sufficiently described. Charlot’s own proposed study of artistic creation was never written, but at least one point does seem inducible from his other writings: art does not have a single source in the human being, but several, which interact differently according to the task. This is certainly true of his own work, as will be seen below.

Because of the complexity of artistic creation, conflicts could arise between its different elements during the movement from inspiration to realization. Charlot rarely “corrected” his oils, but the one occasion I witnessed illustrates my point. On his trip to Europe in the summer of 1968, my father

gave me a small diptych of *Malinches*, each five inches square (October 1966, Checklist 1035, 1036). He had painted them separately and then placed them together in a single frame of his own design. The horizon line on the left painting was horizontal, but that on the right was tipped slightly downward. Before my eyes and over a year after he had painted the two, he overpainted the tipped line to make it horizontal, saying “I do make some changes from time to time.” The change did unify the two paintings by giving them a common horizon line, but it sacrificed the interesting asymmetry and made the space between the figures appear larger and somewhat empty. I think he had allowed his reasonable mind to modify his more valuable inspiration.

This action was unusual because Charlot normally sided with inspiration in such conflicts. He spoke of Titian overpainting his earlier works in his last bold style, and how his family, anxious to sell the pieces, had given him soluble paints so they could return them to their former state. He regretted that someone had interrupted him while he was drawing the cartoon of the bottom right panel of his 1959 fresco in Atchison, Kansas, *Trinity and Episodes of Benedictine Life*; he had lost his inspirational mood and had been forced to reason out the composition. Charlot did, however, feel some ambivalence at times. When a collector expressed admiration for the leftover strokes in the margins of Charlot’s acrylic watercolors—strokes that were in no way part of the image—Charlot began putting tape on the margins so he could remove the brushstrokes once he was done. Some time later, however, he forgot to put on the tape and told me that he found that, after all, the strokes were good looking.

Charlot’s intellectual brilliance is obvious in all his work, and I regret the loss of all the unrecorded ideas and sayings that he tossed off in lectures and conversation. From his early childhood, he is described—in the memories of his sister Odette and his cousin Doly Labadie—as an unusually interesting, exhilarating, and amusing companion. Frank Sheed, who met Charlot in the 1930s, wrote, “I found him endlessly interesting” (Sheed n.d.: 2). Charlot’s son Peter remembered:

whenever I was with him, I had this feeling of “cruising,” which is the word that’s used now—you really felt you were “on the hunt,” and roaming, and “we’re going to discover something in the day,” something was going to happen to you in your life that day, and it was very exciting. (Peter Charlot 1982: 3)

Charlot himself stated, “I have never been bored, I would say” (Lesley and Hollis 1961: 20). I remember thinking, when he died, that I no longer had anyone I could talk with.

Charlot had an impressive sense of humor. Any attempts to lionize him immediately stimulated his French sense of the ridiculous. In his poems, he uses humor to deflate himself just as he could use it to deflate others. Indeed, in his young years, he was known for his aggressive sarcasm in conversation, which impressed my mother so much that she had difficulties recognizing when he was speaking seriously. He did not signal his jokes and they usually cloaked a point; Doly Labadie wrote to Zohmah Charlot (October 25, 1984): “But the answer of Jean is classic of his personality; you never know if he speaks seriously, or saying a joke to confound you.” He used this sarcasm polemically in his early writings, as he described himself in 1928: “son crayon se mue en rapière ou en casse-tête” ‘his pencil moves like a rapier or a club’ (“Une Renaissance Mexicaine,” TF). His rapier could flash out in later

years. In the 1960s, a visiting French naval officer was describing his ship's regular route between the Society Islands and Noumea, the disputed shards of empire; Charlot said softly, "Pas aussi loin qu'autrefois" 'Not as far as in the old days.' He used his bludgeon on a pretentious young scholar who mispronounced *Ionesco*: "We're discussing the playwright, not UNESCO." Humor for Charlot was connected with an attitude to life and art-making. Humor was the artist's preservative against producing bad art; for instance, humor destroys pretention. Once one of Charlot's ex-students praised a bad artist and then remarked, "But she doesn't have your sense of humor." Charlot replied, "If she did, she couldn't do the work she does."

Charlot was extremely emotional although this was seldom evident because he was not obviously demonstrative in his affections and kept his dislike and anger under control. This was partly a tactic to avoid confrontation, as in the case of Merle Armitage, discussed in chapter I (Armitage 1944: 266). The two times I knew him truly to lose his temper were characteristic of him. In 1954, he exploded at a functionary in the Museum of Modern Art who was treating my brother Martin with obvious rudeness. When I asked him about the incident, he was unembarrassed and said that he had been furious that anyone would discourage a young person's interest in art. In the same year—after waiting a long time at the curb with my mother and my brothers Martin and Peter—he stormed past the doorman who was monopolizing the taxis and pushed his family into the next car. I believe the doorman reminded Charlot of all the social authorities who exclude people from the services they should receive. Most often, Charlot would dominate his anger. As I remember, his mouth would tighten, and he would turn away from the object of annoyance. Sometimes he controlled the expression of his anger. He once finished scolding me by saying, "It's not that what you did was so bad, it's just that it comes at the end of a lot of other things." I conclude that he supported most annoyances without reacting to them.

Charlot preferred to pour his emotions into his art. His poems are full of love, desire, anguish, and anger. He loosed his fury in a series of poems on Anita Brenner after she left him; but she apparently never felt that anger, and they went on as friends and collaborators. Charlot recognized how he used his poems for venting and could see with humor the distance between his real life and his complaints. In *Comme on est seul, Seigneur, parmi vos créatures* of May 6, 1923, he writes:

Paix, Jean-de-lettre ! Au réel, je gagne des sous,
ai des amis, vêt un veston, soigne mes gripes,
communie, mange à ma faim et dore mon soûl.

'Peace, Jean-of-the-letter! In reality, I earn my pennies,
have friends, wear a jacket, cure my flus,
go to communion, eat my fill, and sleep after a good drink.'

Charlot wrote repeatedly of the importance of emotion in visual arts both in creating the work and moving the viewer. I provide two examples from an unpublished manuscript (Summer 1951): "All the planning, all the [patience] craft, all the knowledge to be found in a work of art would also be null if they were not qualified by passion"; and "Passion goes hand in hand with originality."

3.2. SENSITIVITIES AND VIEWS

Charlot's sensitivity, observation, and imagination reflected his general personality. All indications are that he was an unusually impressionable, intense, affectionate, and thoughtful child. In fact, a number of his continuing themes can be traced back to his childhood experiences. A particularly clear example is Charlot's distaste for the elaborate clothing worn especially by the upper-middle-class women of his parents' circle as seen in family photographs:

a little Frenchman of circa 1905, dolled in Fauntleroy suits, who could hardly squeeze far enough to kiss an aunt through the pillowed hurdles of bosom, boas, and plumed hat. (*Born Catholics* 1954: 99)

they would squash me to their bosoms. Now it was a time when bosoms were enormous, and I really remember very strongly that elasticity of the ladies at the top and the corseting of iron, I think it was, at the bottom. (Interview October 16, 1970)

He contrasted this unpleasant experience of bourgeois women with the one he had of his wet-nurse, Madame Le Nohan:

she was close to the earth, close to the soil, certainly more than the people who were more at ease in a *salon* at the time. There was specially something terrifically artificial in the women of a certain, well, economic status or class, and they were so heavily dressed and corseted and perfumed and so on that I think I enjoyed the good earth smell of my wet nurse, which I do remember indeed, as a contrast to the more exquisite perfumes that the ladies would drench themselves in. (Interview October 31, 1970)

In Charlot's youth throughout Europe, there was a marked and obvious difference between the clothing of the workers and the upper classes, a contrast that artists like Daumier could use effectively (e.g., Delteil vol. VII, number 2585). Charlot had a detailed knowledge of high fashion—using such terms as “*en bandouliere*” [*sic*] and “*à la poulaine*” (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 293, 297)—but he preferred and painted the classic folk clothing of the family's old cook, wearing her dainty traditional cap. A number of French writers at the turn of the century also appreciated the more practical clothing of the working classes and regretted that they were abandoning it for cheap versions of bourgeois garb. Indeed artists were the last ones to wear the worker's baggy blue pants and balloon-sleeved white shirt, a sort of artist-worker uniform.

In Mexico, the contrast was perhaps even stronger because of the continuing tradition of Indian clothing, as can be seen in the photographs of the Casasola firm. Indeed, common Indians were prohibited from wearing Spanish clothing during Colonial times (Lynch 1973: 301), which made the contrast programmatic. (At the other extreme, during the Porfiriato, an attempt was made to prohibit the wearing of the peasants' white pants! [Warner 1997: 671]) The contrast had already been used by artists,³² was prominent in Posada, and would become part of the iconography of the Taller de Gráfica Popular, as seen especially in the *Estampas de la Revolución Mexicana*. Beginning in Mexico, Charlot

developed the same contrast into a theme that ran through his career. An unpublished 1922 drawing from a notebook, probably intended as a newspaper cartoon, is entitled “Honra la Mujer Mexicana: Porqué?” ‘Honor the Mexican Woman: Why?’ On the left is a traditionally dressed Indian mother and child; a label states: “Tu mujer su hija son bellas y bien vestidas” ‘Your woman and her daughter are beautiful and well dressed.’ On the right are a mother and daughter dressed in expensive Occidental fussiness: “La mujer gringa su hija son Feas y mal vestidas” ‘The gringa woman and her daughter are ugly and badly dressed.’³³ A process print of a similar subject was published in *The Arts* of September 1925 with an extravagantly dressed Mexican mother and child replacing the gringas: the captions read simply “Indian Mother and Child” and “Bourgeois Mother and Child.”³⁴ This drawing was based on a 1909 illustration by Jean-Louis Boussingault contrasting the classical simplicity of the designs of the couturier Paul Poiret to the complications of the earlier style (White 1973: 29). The connection between the two pictures is too close to be unconscious and is meant to be felt by the knowledgeable viewer. Charlot is using an obvious reference to add a further level of meaning to his work: Indian clothes represented the true elegance that a Parisian can appreciate. The dress of Indian women can best be compared to the Greek:

Mettez une femme “chic” au côté d’une des vierges du Parthénon, ce sera à éclater de rire ou à pleurer de dépit. L’une quelconque de ces indiennes la reconnaîtra pour sœur. Même pose, même geste... La sortie des femmes aux messes matinales, la monotone beauté des pieds nus, des jupes larges et des draperies enroulées, n’est-ce le rythme même des Panathénées.³⁵

‘Put a “chic” woman next to one of the virgins of the Parthenon—it makes you burst into laughter or weep with chagrin. Any one of these Indian women would recognize her as a sister. Same pose, same gesture... The women leaving the church after the morning Mass, the monocolored beauty of the naked feet, the wide skirts and rolled draperies—is it not the same rhythm as the procession of women at the Panathenaea?’

Outstanding later examples of this theme are the woodblock print of 1924 *Rich People in Hell* (Morse number 56); the 1924 oil painting *Dowager and Newsboys* (Charlot checklist number 68); and the process print illustrations for Anita Brenner’s *The Timid Ghost* (William R. Scott, New York, 1966).

The contrast between different types of clothing was not superficial, but represented a deep cultural divide.³⁶ Charlot did not want to assimilate workers and Indians into bourgeois culture; even more, he preferred their cultures to the bourgeois and used their clothing as an example of their superiority. Charlot would all his life feel a prejudice for the poor and against the rich. He nonetheless persisted in identifying himself with his *grande bourgeoisie* background, recognizing how it had formed him, and feeling some pride in it.

Charlot was innately sensitive to art. He was tremendously impressed by the bronze sculpture of a horse by Antoine Louis Barye that had been placed on a dresser in his room. The figure was small, but the horse seemed monumental to Charlot as he looked up at it. I took notes of a conversation I had with my father in late 1976 (Tabletalk):

he said that it's so hard for us to realize how things look from the child's point of view. For instance, the Barye horse in Ann's room looks like a small piece of sculpture now, but he remembers looking up at it on a table as a child. The belly swelled out enormously, and it looked as big as a real horse.

The impression did not fade. On his 1920 preparatory drawing for textile designs, *noé: animals—lion, elephant, monkey, etc.*, Charlot wrote “voir Barye” ‘see Barye.’ During his final illness, he asked that the same bronze be placed on the Korean cabinet next to his bed, reproducing, as he told me, his childhood point of view.

This childhood sensitivity to art resulted in key esthetic decisions. On a visit to the Louvre, he was frightened by the staring eyes of an Egyptian god. In his ledger, he drew a picture of the statue and then tried unsuccessfully to obliterate the large eyes by scrawling over them roughly with his pencil (*Juvenilia* 1904: 03c recto). The experience of the statue taught him, he said later, to avoid obvious and direct means of expressing the godhead. Very rarely do figures look directly at the viewer from Charlot's works. In the interview of September 15, 1970, Charlot stated:

I want to be a little more subtle than those Egyptians, for example, and have a great attention at not painting the eyes in my pictures so that they could look at the people who look at the picture because that seems to me a rather primitive way of suggesting the spirit. It's very, very rare in my paintings when there are any what you could call “seeing eyes” in the picture. There is always some way of avoiding that presentation of, let's call it the eyeball, because the spirit should be more secret and less obvious than in that. And that comes from my first experiences not only with Egyptians but, for example, the portraits by La Tour, the pastels of La Tour, which are really all eyes, are the most frightening thing in the world. I don't like them at all because it seems to me that the dead shouldn't be so lively, and so on.

In the 1960s, a priest complained to me about my father's bronze crucifix: “Where's the face?” I responded that it was all over the body; that is, the whole work took on the expressiveness usually perceived only in the face. To use the face as one's prime means of expression was facile.

Charlot's acute sensitivity to art was never dulled. He spoke of the “tremendous experience” of seeing Ingres' *The Martyrdom of Saint Symphorien* for the first time in 1968 (Interview September 9, 1970). In the mid-1950s, I found my father unusually reticent while we were visiting the New York apartment of an art collector and former patron. Suddenly, he got up and walked over to look at a Van Gogh landscape that had been hanging behind him. He resumed his seat, still looking uncomfortable. When I later asked him what had been troubling him, he said, “I couldn't think of anything but Van Gogh's ear.”³⁷

Prominent in Charlot's descriptions of his childhood experiences are two elements that will remain central throughout his life. The first is a sense that every thing, if seen correctly, has a quality that impresses powerfully and demands respect. Charlot formulated this view most often in religious terms:

things were created by God and therefore had a beauty and sacredness that we as human beings had to learn to appreciate, indeed, to contemplate with humility and awe. This view was not a belief in things unseen, but was an expression of Charlot's daily observation and experience of the world. Once in the early 1950s, my father found me playing at sword-fighting by decapitating the flowers on a bush in our yard. He was genuinely angry and scolded, "Just look at those flowers. Do you think you could ever make anything so complicated or so beautiful?" This view was very much a part of Charlot's treatment of materials as an artist: oil and mortar and wood had a beauty of their own that had to be respected. The artist worked with his materials in the joy of creation: fame and fortune:

no tienen nexo alguno con la creación artística, con el único lujo que él puede permitirse: hacer arte, que a su vez podemos definir como una colaboración del artista con el material con el cual la obra se realiza, y su dominio. (Charlot May 1947 "Papeles")

'have no connection with artistic creation, with the unique luxury that the artist can permit himself: to make art, which we can in turn define as a collaboration of the artist with the material with which the work is realized, and its master.'

This view also agreed with core values of primary religions—for Charlot, principally Mexican Indian and Hawaiian religion—which enabled Charlot to discuss those religions with understanding and sympathy. His statement that "all artists think alike" (Brenner 1970: 312) was not limited to techniques and devices. For Charlot, the making of art in itself implied a view of the value of the physical world, and he reacted strongly against art trends that elevated the artist to a point where he was permitted to treat materials arbitrarily and destructively. For instance, Charlot felt very strongly the beauty of the bare surface of the prepared lithographic stone; he was deeply pained when he heard that some modernizing artists were scratching and digging into that surface to achieve new effects.

I would not be exaggerating in saying that Charlot could feel the pain of the stone, for the second characteristic prominent in his description of childhood experiences is his personalism. Charlot could not treat people as less than fully human; he had to establish full human relations with them. Even further, Charlot could not treat things as mere objects in the normal sense. That is, Charlot felt engaged—with everything he met—in a relationship that demanded in one way or another his full being.

Charlot's personalism is very clear in his family relations, as discussed in chapter 2. His friends throughout his life considered him a good companion. Less ordinary in turn-of-the-century France, which was divided along class lines, was Charlot's feelings for the family servants: the family cooks and his wet-nurse, to whom he stayed close as he grew older (Interview October 31, 1970): "there was a sort of continuous friendship that remained between us." Charlot would never be able to treat people merely according to their social function as servants and was uncomfortable in any situation in which he was supposed to. My mother once joked that he had not married a rich woman because he couldn't face life with her butler. Charlot was naturally conscious of social and cultural differences, but rather than wanting to change or assimilate the people he loved, he appreciated and celebrated their cultural advantages.

Charlot's extension of his personalism beyond human beings is clearest in his relation to animals, which started very early in life:

J'aime beaucoup les enfants et les animaux

...

Et la simplicité des bêtes m'est un ciel.

'I love very much children and animals

...

And the simplicity of animals is a heaven for me.' (*J'ai passé ce temps très tranquille sans jupons*—, July 3, 1925)

Animals are in fact prominent in Charlot's art; his first drawing was of a dog running up a hill. His earliest dated drawing is of a harnessed ostrich that has broken free of its trainer and is running free, smilingly happy to be itself. In the summer of 1959, my father and I attended a small circus in Kansas. A chimpanzee that had been awkwardly riding a tricycle suddenly hopped off, jumped up into the rigging of the tent, and swung around gracefully until its trainer managed to force it back onto the tricycle. My father said, "Don't they see how much more impressive they are when they're acting in their own way?"³⁸

Charlot's animals are usually based on actual models. Charlot spoke of his preparatory sketches for *L'Amitié* (1921), his "masterpiece" that summarizes his art up to that point:

I still have some of those separate studies of my dog, which is there, Mousmé. It was incidentally a little Mexican hairless. I don't remember how we got it because we hadn't been to Mexico then.³⁹

they are called *esquintli*, *esquintli* is in Nahuatl—that is, of hairless dogs of Mexican villages. I don't know how we had one, but I know that we had one that was our own in France, and we brought him to Mexico. And it was the original hairless dog, and lots of people had never seen them before, didn't know what it was. (Interview March 26, 1978)

Charlot's intense feelings for Mousmé are revealed in a note he wrote in September 1922:

9–22 à propos de la mort de Mousmé

les animaux étant dans *l'ordre naturel* (pas péché Adam) peuvent avoir (car ils ne sont pas absolument mécaniques) une force énorme devant Dieu, par leurs sentiments.

prière à Dieu pour, dans le passé, donner à Mousmé une vie heureuse). en échange lui rappeler l'affection que Mousmé eut pour nous le priant de l'agréer pour notre salut.

difficultés de comprendre l'anéantissement de cette petite vie individuelle. N'y a-t-il un texte de St Paul qui parle du salut pour l'homme *et les animaux*. qu'entendre par là?⁴⁰

'9–22 on the death of Mousmé

animals being in the natural order (no sin of Adam) can have (because they are not absolutely mechanical) an enormous power before God, by their emotions. prayer to God for, in the past, to give to Mousmé a happy life). in exchange remind Him of the affection that Mousmé had for us, praying Him to accept him for our salvation. difficulties of understanding the annihilation of this little individual life. Isn't there a text of St. Paul that speaks of salvation for man *and the animals*? what to understand by that?'

In these quotations and the discussion below can be seen Charlot's openness to enlarging his Christianity on the strength of his emotion. For instance, animals could provide moral example, an indication of the connection of the natural to the moral order:

Obligation de connaître Dieu

Autre attribut préfiguré dans les créatures : la simplicité chez les animaux.
Si je les aime pour leur simplicité combien plus la simplicité absolue. (ca.
1926–1927)

'Obligation to know God

Another attribute prefigured in creatures: the simplicity of animals.
If I love them for their simplicity, how much more absolute simplicity.'

Charlot maintained this view of animals throughout his life: "Next to the books stands Capriccio, St. Philip's dog, as a reminder that all things in creation are holy" (November 1959). Mousmé is portrayed in Charlot's pre-Mexico masterpiece *L'Amitié* (1921) and figures prominently in his first Mexican fresco, *The Massacre in the Main Temple* (1922–1923), for both of which preparatory drawings survive. Describing one of his prints, Charlot stated: "Also, to tell the whole truth, the dog is there because, for a long time, such a dog was a loved member of our family. Every time I see a chance to do it, I put him in my pictures" (*Mary and Art* 1958). According to my mother, Charlot had a similarly close relationship with a little dog in Yucatán, which he used as a model in a number of his paintings. Another dog we owned in Hawai'i is used in the fresco *Commencement* (1953) and in the ceramic mural *Refuse Collectors* (1970).⁴¹

Charlot had a similar relationship with birds, which were a favorite childhood subject and became again an important part of his art in Hawai'i. In the early 1950s, we children rescued a number of wild birds, which lived in our house in faculty housing at the university. They were allowed to fly around free and perch on the small paper-bark tree in the living room, despite their droppings, which Charlot would patiently wipe up. Our mynah bird Kama'i was the subject of a large number of sketches for the frieze of birds in the mural *Commencement* (1953). From the time we moved to our home in Kāhala in 1958 until my father's death, a series of escaped exotic birds made their home with us. They would often perch on my father; one would perch quietly on his glasses as he worked (and was photographed thus by Francis Haar). My father would study them and, if they remained long enough, would use them as models (he was sad that a Chinese duck had not stayed long enough to be made into an image). As

Charlot became more interested in landscape painting, birds were used with increasing prominence in his oils.⁴²

Such uses of birds have a clear religious significance in Hawaiian culture; birds can be gods. Indeed, Charlot's reflection on the death of Mousmé, quoted above, shows that he had a religious feeling for animals, which he strove to give a Christian interpretation. The feeling was, however, prior to the interpretation, and he had to make an effort to integrate it into his Christian understanding. His feeling for and use of birds was clearly closer to, or at least moving in the direction of, primary religions, specifically Hawaiian. Charlot was a close friend of the Hawaiian feather-worker Johanna Cluney, who had a traditional religious understanding of birds. Charlot noted that an unusually large number of birds attended her funeral (Tabletalk March 1978). Charlot once told me that he found it odd that people thought animals blended into the background; birds have such bright feathers. For Charlot, these represented the "gratuitous" beauty of nature, "the exuberance of evolution," an esthetic beyond practicality: "A butterfly wing seems as gratuitous in the natural realm as a painting in the man-made world..."; "those supererogative attributes which God intended for each—sheen of silks, lusciousness of fruits, sensuousness of bodies."⁴³ Cardinals are an amazing point of bright light in nature. In the ceramic mural *Night Hula* (1961), a bird provides a flash of red amidst the dark night colors. Because he equated that beauty with religion, he felt that birds (as well as human beings) revealed the mystical or spiritual side of nature. Accordingly in his work, birds are often perched on Hawaiian god images (e.g., number 1182 *Hala Grove with Cardinal* 1969, 30" X 40"). Charlot also combined birds with his favorite pandanus tree in our Kāhala garden to express his view of nature; the bird becomes totemic in a living plant.

That this religious sense of animals was early, even innate, in Charlot is seen in the fact that his earliest linking of art and religion involved combinations of animal and human forms:

I must have been four years old or so, I was very, very young, and I had a book of sketches, and those sketches to me were sort of sacred. That is, I didn't like grownups or even my sister who was four years older than me to have a look at those drawings because they had a certain character of sacredness; they were my gods, I'm sorry to say. I had made little people who had usually human bodies and animal heads. I remember very well one of them with a horse head. And then in their hands I would put something for their nourishment. I remember putting a can of sardines in the hands of one of those little gods. And the thing for me was so mysterious that I hardly wanted to look at it.⁴⁴

Charlot recognized the possibility that these drawings had been inspired by Egyptian or other art,⁴⁵ but thought that he had been too young at the time to have received that influence:

I think that's before I had been looking at anything at all. I think I was just off the bottle, and it would interest some people who are trying to see what the cavemen were doing when they started religion. I think it was directly out of myself that I created that religion even though of course ancient sculptors have created similar things. But

in case it is any good to the people who study religion, the fact that the fellow had a human body and a horse head, to go back to that little guy, didn't mean at all that he was a horse in any way or a man in any way, but coupling the two into an impossible being suggested certainly a mystery above anything that can be described.

Charlot felt that the book represented his earliest thoughts on the subject:

I think what I told you about that little book of secret gods is something that withered out as I grew up, even to childhood, something nearly that an infant would have. It's interesting for me because I can imagine prehistoric times when similar things would have happened, but it did not stay with me through life. I think there is definitely a cleft in there between my infancy and my childhood, so to speak. (Interview October 7, 1970)

In his art history course at the University of Hawai'i, Charlot lectured on cave painting with much sympathy and understanding. I remember him emphasizing the acuteness with which the cave artist observed and represented animals. Charlot recognized the numinous in the fabulous animals of cartoons:

I think what you are doing now is just what your means imply. You have to use a volume that is particularized. In the case of subject matter, that means that the volumes you use, the bodies you represent, have to have bumps. If they are bumpy, they have to be caricatures to a great extent, so animation is proper to caricature style—and even to the subject matter: those very strange Egyptian gods you use, people with animal heads doing strange things...Animated human beings give me, your public, a sense of uneasiness. The animals are removed from me, very logical within their own characters and godlike in their features. (*Pictures and Picture-Making*, June 7, 1938).

We bow to this newly created pantheon of animal godlings, Mickey Mouse et al., for they are different from us, godlike, irrational. (*AA I*: 218)

Writing Brenner on her religious life, he urged her to focus on God's creation:

Hay que tomar "things material" in its full sense: ["Things created" como son objetos, animales (the attribute of simplicity in animals is for me one of the nearest exteriorisations of god)... (February 2, 1925)

'You have to take "material things" in its full sense: "Things created" as are objects, animals (the attribute of simplicity in animals is for me one of the nearest exteriorizations of god)...'

Charlot extended his personalizing view to all elements of nature. He was delighted when a buyer returned a ceramic shell Charlot had made for his garden with the words, "It's alive"; the buyer had felt the shell was crawling around his garden at night. Charlot depicted pandanus plants as walking with

their aerial roots and showing their male and female characteristics; here again, he drew on Hawaiian ideas and symbols:

I love plants, but I would feel that I don't love plants as still life. I have always a very vivid impression that they are closer to animals... the native plants are about the most imposing thing that you can catch on to what ancient Hawaii was. And I think that's what makes me do those frescoes of plants, leaves mostly, if you look at them, and a few landscapes of hala forests that have... Actually I always have a sort of sacred feeling when I look at hala groves... But the hala still for me are the significance that is very close to the kahuna's mana of the gods and all those things. ("Charlot," ca. 1971)

Stones became as prominent in Charlot's paintings of Hawaiian subjects and the landscape as they are in Hawaiian religion. The ceramic garden sculpture *Chinese Rock* (1961) and the rocks worshipped by Hawaiian priests in the frescoes *Early Contacts of Hawaii with Outer World* (1951–1952) and *The Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawaii* (1974) are based on the nude back of my mother in a 1934 oil.⁴⁶ Charlot discussed the stone in the former mural in the interview of September 15, 1970:

Liturgical art is a sort of relation of man to God. We think of it usually, for us anyhow, for me with my background, as being Christian, Catholic art, church art, but of course all the people who have dabbled, I would say, in establishing a bridge between God or the gods and themselves have had to go through such things, so that the God-stone that you are speaking about, that is, the stone in which the god has established for the moment anyhow his house, his home, was something sacred and had to be treated with respect, and it's not just historically that I didn't want that *kahuna* to turn his back on God, but I didn't want to represent him as a fellow who, even though his profession was faith, would have shown a lack of faith by that attitude. So it goes very far in touching other points than storytelling. I suppose one of them is really the relation of the artist and God.

Charlot summed up his general view in the interview of August 7, 1971:

you can make the portrait of a person or of a dog or of a tree. Each one is a mystery in the very real sense of the word. I don't think you have to go into theology for that, but simply the complexity of each one as a construction, and of course when it gets into motion, reasons, and so on, each one is a universe, and I don't want to summarize that particular universe into a few lines for the glorification of the artist. It seems to me I would lose so much, again, if I didn't hug very closely the natural, call it phenomena.

Human beings needed the humility to acknowledge their place in this enormous universe; again a view that is closer to primary religions than to Judeo-Christianity:

That man, the king of the Creation, which we can get of course from the Good Book, that is, God gives us the animals and the plants, and the this and the that to do with as we wish—is something that some other cultures have not felt. The sense of mystery on the contrary and the sense of being the size we are—that is, if we measure our body—the size we are in a nature that has many other things of a more colossal size, brings a sense of mystery. And also that sense that it's not always nature that is our servant, but man is, in so many ways, lost in nature. One of the phrases, I think, that recur in some of my plays, is to walk on tiptoe in nature. And that's the opposite of man the master of our little universe. And it happens that that thing, which I think I was born with, that sense of mystery and walking on tiptoe, which I've done all my life, is something that I had not tied up to the Hawaiians. When I tied it up to the Hawaiians, I felt much more brotherly. There was a link there in some of the deepest part of our relationship to nature—both the Hawaiians and myself...And that Hawaiian sense of mystery and tiptoeing, again, is something that was in me. You can call it prefiguration that certainly receives its exterior figuration in Hawai'i, and as such, I think that my view of the Hawaiians and so on has a certain validity.⁴⁷

You are looking at my fresco here that has some banana trees and papaya trees and ti leaf plants, some red ones and some grey ones. I love plants, but I would feel that I don't love plants as still life. I have always a very vivid impression that they are closer to animals, and if you look for pre-Hawai'i or pre-Cook Hawai'i in the present Hawai'i, the native plants are about the most imposing thing that you can catch on to what ancient Hawai'i was. And I think that's what makes me do those frescoes of plants, leaves mostly, if you look at them, and a few landscapes of *hala* forests that have *mana*. Actually I always have a sort of sacred feeling when I look at *hala* groves. After the first time by those Seven Falls where there were some beautiful *hala* groves... I think they have been reordered into a park which probably doesn't have [the same feeling]. But the *hala* still for me are the significance that is very close to the kahuna's *mana* of the gods and all those things. (ca. 1971 Charlot)

Charlot felt he had been “born with...that sense of mystery”; it was part of his earliest memories, his earliest childhood. In his poem *or c'était dans le parc classique* of 1913, he writes:

l'homme agonise, mais qu'est
l'homme devant la nature

'man agonizes, but what
is man before nature'

This sense of childlike wonder and awe is clearly one of the bases of Charlot's religion. A specific expression of this wonder is found in the depiction of trees, which Charlot recognized in Máximo Pacheco:

Jean says you can tell his infantile mind still in one detail: the trunks of the trees are enormous, like towers or castles, which is the impression he carries with him from when he was very small. (Glusker 2010: 506)

Charlot's sense of wonder linked his religious sensibility to the primary religions that he would appreciate throughout his life and that had an impact on his Christianity. Just as in the case of animals, Charlot established a connection between his sensibility and his Christianity: one had to become like a little child to enter the Kingdom of Heaven—or even indeed to see the world around one. That is, Charlot's childlike wonder at the world oriented his own spirituality toward the physical as opposed to a general tendency in the Catholicism of his time to depreciate it. Charlot would always see the physical world as God's creation and a manifestation of his beauty and goodness. God counted every hair on our head and noted the fall of every sparrow. Charlot would always treasure the physical elements of ritual—the bread of the Host and the ashes of Ash Wednesday, which he told me put him in the “mood” of prayer. He would prefer those mystics whose visions were visual and physical, providing depictable subjects. Charlot would pay lip-service to the nonphysical—saying always that he was not a metaphysician or a theologian—while stressing the difference between artistic and metaphysical thinking (*AA* I: 317 f.). But he would see his orientation toward the physical world as a necessity for his religious vocation as an artist: “Que l'offre de mon travail physique correspond pour les Saints aux contemplations—” ‘May the offering of my physical work correspond for saints to contemplation’ (1920–1925: *Journal de Méditations*, June 2, 1920).

In 1920, Charlot recorded some general thoughts on these subjects in his *Ludwigshafen Notebook*:

(June 7) L'homme lépreux et la maison lépreuse.

De la solidarité des créatures : anges, hommes, animaux, objets. Que nos “frères inférieurs” ne nous doivent pas être plus indifférents qu'à Dieu. Qu'ils participent en quelque sorte à la Rédemption (désirée des collines éternelles) dans leur solidarité avec l'homme—

De la valeur spirituelle des objets : lieux d'élection (Eglise. images). lieux possédés. Prions pour que Dieu nous présente favorablement notre salut par les objets et autres créatures

‘The leper and the house of lepers.

On the solidarity of creatures: angels, human beings, animals, objects. That our “inferior brothers” should not be more indifferent to us than they are to God. That they participate in some way in the Redemption (desired by the eternal hills) in their solidarity with man—

On the spiritual value of objects: places chosen by God (Church. images). possessed places.

Let us pray that God presents our salvation favorably to us through objects and other creatures’

(July 21) de l'utilisation pour Dieu des objets de métier :

pour M. Madeleine. Nard. Cheveux—

moi : représentation des formes.

d'une clef spirituelle du monde physique.

'on the use for God of objects of work:

for Mary Magdalene. Nard. Hair—

me: representation of forms.

on a spiritual key for the physical world.'

(August 13) de l'Eglise continuant L'*humanité* de NS. seule porte pour nous,
hommes.

'on the Church continuing the Humanity of Our Lord. sole door for us, human
beings.'

(October [?] 13) —du "vrai." vrai est l'individu quand Conforme aux qualités de
l'espèce : or vrai

vrai pour les minéraux : soumis à pesanteur, densité etc.

“ “ végétaux : suivre lois fécondité croissance.

“ “ animaux : soumission à l'instinct.

“ homme : par *raison*, *volonté*,

tous 2 libres découle l'acte libre—

par essence l'acte vrai est agréable à Dieu, parce que dans son plan.

'—on the "true." the individual is true when in Conformity with the qualities of its
species: thus true

true for minerals: submissive to weight, density, etc.

“ “ plants: follow laws of fertility, growth.

“ “ animals: submission to instinct.

“ “ human beings: by *reason*, *will*,

since both are free, the free act flows from them

by its essence, the true act is agreeable to God, because in his plan.'

(ca. October 1920) La matière proche des passions (aliments, corps) est très bonne
puisque de Dieu. Son usage humain la pollue...des fleurs bonnes à regarder et
nocives à cueillir.

'The matter near the passions (food, body) is very good because from God. The
human usage pollutes it...some flowers are good to look at but harmful to pluck.'

Equally important was Charlot's early linking of religion with artistic expression—the two
would in fact become inseparable for him, although he recognized that others did not feel the same
connection. The drawings in his secret book of gods "are my earliest memories of linking art and
religion, and even though it's a little twisted, that's the way it was" (Interview September 15, 1970). As a

child he was “dazzled” by Christian liturgical art and by images of the gods in museums. When I asked him how he had made such an early link between art and religion, he replied:

Well, I really don’t know, but it seems to me that it is so obvious that I don’t see how people can have any other idea. That is, it’s one of those things I haven’t *arrived* at but have taken for granted; you take for granted, well, your feet and your hands, and I took for granted that art was a home for God, or in another sense for the gods. It may come really from my roaming around in the Louvre. I would go in the dark corners of the Egyptian, for example, exhibits, and I remember the eyes of those fellows that were very often made up so that they would shine in the light like real eyes looking at me, and I was quite sure that there was something behind. Of course it was an illusion; they were carved either in wood or in stone, but I am not so sure that because if you had cut the statue in two and found it was only rock or only wood, it wasn’t the proof of anything because into that cavity of the work of art there was obviously something, something watching and looking. And I looked back, and, as I say, it isn’t anything I arrived at: it was so obvious. (Interview September 15, 1970)

Again Charlot found in primary religions the language he needed to articulate his view:

I believe that art has a virtue. I don’t know if virtue should be understood in a regular theological context, but maybe *mana*, the old Hawaiian word, is closer. That is, good art encloses a certain power that comes to it from God, or if you want to use the pagan term, from the gods, and bad art lacks, is negative as far as that godly power is concerned. So it seems to me, of course, an absurdity to pretend to praise God with the form of art that would not contain Him, that would not accept Him and reject Him, so to speak. That’s in a way why I think that the only liturgical art in the sense of the word doesn’t depend on subject matter but on being good art. (Interview September 15, 1970)

Indeed, Charlot early thought of art as sacramental: “the outward sign of an inward grace” in Christian theology; more primarily, the physical means of action and materials through which power is transferred. In an unpublished article on his Christianity, he wrote:

when in the glory of their liturgical vestments, they [the priests] would lift the Host and proceed with the Transsubstantiation, this power seemed to me as natural, though more sublime, than the power I had of scribbling matchmen in the margins of my school books. (Summer 1951)

As I stated above, Charlot emphasized the physical in his personal Catholicism: “It is the physical that [attracts] edifies me most within the religious. It pleases me that our Lord would mix mud and spittle to cure the sick instead of a more elegant imposition of hands.” The first sense Charlot used was always the visual: “My own way of remembering God is not reason, science, plenitude or sorrow, but optics.” When he closed his eyes, he wrote:

the finger-tips, tongue and skin make contact with the Church at its border in the sacraments. All the pomp, colour and rhythms of the liturgy do not match in efficiency the sacramental contact, from the dipping of the hand in holy water to the taste and texture of the Host at the palate, to, let us hope, the final massaging of feet and hands, ears and lids with the holy chrism of Extreme Unction. Sensuous to the last, my special field of devotion leans towards the physical matter without which sacramentals and sacraments could not happen...people are also matter, organic matter powerfully invaded by the Spirit... (*Born Catholics* 1954: 113)

Again, Charlot connected this sacramental sensibility with primary religions. Discussing the view of St. Francis of Assisi, Charlot stated in the interview of April 24, 1978:

He has a rather marvelous way of introducing nature, introducing the world in his life and in his piety, shall we say. I'm not speaking of the idea of the little birdies and so on, but in his *Canticle of the Sun*, for example. People who would like to put labels on things would say that it is pantheism. That is, he doesn't disguise God, if you want, as an Apollo; and when he speaks of the different materials of the world, he doesn't give them names like, let's say, the Greeks or the Romans did, the names of the forests and so on. But he has exactly the same feeling that not only religion, but God, perhaps in his minor manifestations, is everywhere. I know that I can't look at water or drink specially water without thinking of his own adjective on water. He says in his *Canticle* that it's incorruptible. And it's done with a great seriousness. Now, maybe a doctor wouldn't agree to that, but it shows a religion engrained. And I think for myself, I'm terribly fond of the sacraments because the sacraments bring nature and small parts and everyday parts of nature in the most noble role in religion. And of course, Christianity, it's the bread and the wine, which were the two things that were easy to get and were not noble in the sense of being rare like the spices that the kings of the Orient bring to Christ in the stories. Those have a role to play, which is definitely religious and definitely noble. Now, of course, my own, I certainly won't say philosophy, but my own feel in all my work is the nobility of small things, of humble things, of humble material, we could say. And so I feel very much at ease with Christianity that has never that I know despised nature.

Art itself was religious because of its intrinsic religious power, not its subject matter:

we should realize that God can really get into all the nooks and cracks of everybody's conscience and that art, however strange it can look, may be inhabited by a good spirit of a sort and a certain power regardless of how unusual it seems to people who haven't looked at it before. That goes also for works of art that have no religious or liturgical intent. (Interview September 15, 1970)

Charlot's vocation was to be a liturgical artist, whatever he painted. That Charlot arrived at such ideas early accords with his view of childhood. Just as children were naturally artists, they could be naturally religious artists. Charlot was charmed by an exhibition of children's liturgical art:

Christ said, "Let the little children come to me."

Here they flock fearlessly to Him, and to His Mother, and to His saints. With pen, pencil, colored chalks, watercolors, gouaches, oils, mosaics, clay and needlework, also wire sculpture, paper sculpture, thread sculpture, mobiles and stables, they express their delight...

The pall of assumed holiness that disguises so much of our sacred art is rent aside, fresh air enters the Holy of Holies. (April 24, 1964)

Charlot's emotional foundation in primary religion could be accommodated within his Catholicism through the ideas of natural and primitive revelation. Natural revelation was the reflection of God in His Creation; primitive revelation was His communications to people prior to or outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition, like figures before Abraham in the Old Testament. Both these revelations enabled people to know God and to do His will; Charlot appreciated Jean Daniélou's *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament* (1957). The full revelation in the Bible was the perfection and clarification of these earlier revelations. Probably in early 1917, Charlot used primitive revelation as a proof of the existence of God:

L'homme possède l'idée de Dieu, explicable, non par voie d'évolution (de l'animalité à l'humanité), ni de logique, ni par aucun point de vue utilitaire (ce dernier point est même opposé à l'idée de Dieu.), donc par révélation primitive.

Cette révélation provient de Dieu (si Dieu existe seul il se comprend). Dieu agit—Il vit—donc il est. ("Preuves de l'Existence de Dieu")

'Human beings have the idea of God, explicable, not through evolution (from animality to humanity), nor logic, nor any utilitarian point of view (this last is even opposed to the idea of God), thus through primitive revelation.

This revelation comes from God (if God exists, He alone understands Himself). God acts—He lives—thus He exists.'

Charlot, however, went much further in recognizing the reality of the pagan gods. In discussing Paul Claudel's comic treatment of the Aztec gods, Charlot stated:

Of course, those gods for me were very close, not only to my archeological work, but I would say to my heart, because of that quota of Aztec in me, and I was a little unhappy that he would treat so—in such a lively way, but also superficial way, the gods of my ancestors. (Interview December 7, 1970)

Later in Hawai'i, he would joke that God had sent the Hawaiian gods to care for the Hawaiians until the French Catholic missionaries would arrive.

Charlot's religion was based on his most fundamental sensibilities and experiences, and these led him to primary religions. His own Christianity replicated the historical development of Christianity itself

from primary religions and the religion of Israel. Charlot's self-aware knowledge of history made him unusually open to and appreciative of indigenous religions. Although he never practiced a religion other than Christianity, I believe he became increasingly open to primary religion through his life. In Mexico, he declined an invitation to participate in a Maya religious ceremony; in Hawai'i, his art focused on Hawaiian religious themes and experiences. Perhaps advancing age strengthened his self-assurance.

3.3. PERSONALITY AND EARLY CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING

Charlot's Christian instruction at the earliest stage of his life was in the family and rudimentary enough for a child to understand. Religion, or morality, seems however to have been emphasized. When I asked him a very general question about his relationship with his parents, he replied:

Well, I really don't think it was different from any other relations of children to parents. I was just growing up, and they were doing what they could to make a good guy of me. I don't know if they succeeded or not. There is really nothing very original to tell you about it. (Interview September 19, 1970)

Being a good person entailed doing one's duty and one's work. In his earliest surviving story, "Le petit garçon studieux" 'The studious little boy', undated, the little boy works "avec ardeur" at his verbs, does not make blots, and keeps his notebook clean. As a result the parents love the little boy with all their heart. In a letter of the same time to his mother, he asks her to correct his homework. The connection between working hard, being good, and enjoying his parent's love is significant. Work is what one *should* do, a part of being good. Similarly, in very early drawings no later than 1900 (*Juvenilia* 1904: 40a recto—40b recto), Charlot has depicted three men holding banners or flags, which represent prizes. His father, Henri, wrote on each page the young Jean's explanation of the drawing: one man had "bien travaillé" 'worked well' in battle, another had won a race, and the last had won at hunting. Charlot was definitely a good boy and worked very hard. He started a prolific production of drawings at least by two years of age and was soon composing a large amount of poetry. He would very soon undertake large and complicated projects that would require a variety of talents. That is, his extraordinarily productive career began in his childhood. In Charlot's mature thinking, art would become his religious mission in life. Charlot had what Anglo-Saxons call "a work ethic"; an extreme illustration of this is the fact that he hurried my mother to help him finish his article "José Guadalupe and his successors" (1979) through the whole of the last day on which he was able to function. Indeed, when someone once said proudly that he was eighty years old, Charlot felt like retorting, "Well, and what have you done?" As he himself reached eighty, Charlot told me he now felt it was in fact an accomplishment.

Beyond normal parental love, Charlot's parents responded to the manifestations of his special talents by providing moral and practical support, including art teachers. Although Charlot never stated it, his parents, family, and friends seem to have treated him as a prodigy. He remembers a family gathering being astonished when his first drawing—a dog running up a hill—was passed around. Charlot was at most two years old at the time—his first surviving drawing is dated 1900—so the impression produced is understandable. Charlot's early artworks were kept by his parents, and his grandfather described his doggerel as a rival to Jean's poetry. Such reactions continued throughout his childhood. Charlot's cousin

and childhood playmate Doly Labadie, the daughter of Luis, described to me in a letter of February 14, 1980, a most impressive puppet presentation Charlot had given in 1911: “My father pronosticated [*sic*] he will be recognized some day like a great artist.” Others encouraged him as well. While walking to Condorcet, Charlot was impressed by the paintings of Le Douanier Rousseau in a gallery window. He took some of his own work to show the owner, who judged them good and encouraged him to continue painting.

This is not to say that some relatives did not try to influence him in other directions. Charlot may have been referring to a particular episode in *Born Catholics* (1954: 98), “when I chose art as my career, I eschewed other, more substantial pursuits”:

Circa 1910-1912, my godfather, Frederic Caplain, gave me for my birthday a stock certificate in a platinum mine. His own business was connected with precious metals, gold and silver. It was an actual ownership of stock, and I remember that at my uncle’s bidding cutting coupons attached and receiving some sort of dividends.⁴⁸

In a draft memorandum by Odette, written after 1950, seeking information on a safety deposit box, she mentions “des valeurs de mines de platine donnés à mon frère par son parrain (vers ses 10 ans) et que mon frère recherche actuellement” “some platinum mine securities given to my brother by his godfather (when he was around ten years old) and that my brother is looking for at this time.” When put to the test after his father’s death, Charlot would prove disastrous at business.

The advantage of this general family support and encouragement was that Charlot’s talents survived past his twelfth year and developed to maturity. The danger was that Charlot could have been spoiled as a person. Charlot knew that he was receiving special treatment—he had only to contrast it with Odette’s. Pride would be Charlot’s main temptation until the appearance of strong sexual ones later, and he was well aware of his interior shortcomings, describing himself as a “bookish and proud brat” (Summer 1951). Added to the temptation were the leadership qualities that Charlot displayed as a child, organizing a puppet theatre, being quickly invited to join the direction of an aviation club, and teaching a younger cousin how to draw. But he struggled against his temptations; and whatever pride, vanity, and arrogance he was feeling never reached his surface. In fact, Charlot used his special status to help his sister within the family—although his own relations with her were troubled—and all reports agree that Charlot never acted in social relations as if he were more than an ordinary person of his station and age. His cousin, Jules Briançon, remembered him only as a fun playmate. At a time when Charlot was deeply engrossed in his art and poetry, Briançon remembered that “He never talked about art with me.”

Growing up in a large extended family provides in itself some balance in one’s identity. Although Charlot’s parents treated him clearly as the favorite child, they would have given him the conventional Christian warnings about pride. But the main impetus for the development of Charlot’s character appears from an early age to have been internal. That is, Charlot’s demeanor was the result of early and fundamental moral decisions. This can be seen in his protection of Odette. She was a bothersome older sibling, and he would have found it easy to join her detractors or even to use his

position against her. In fact, it would have been normal for a child to do so. That Charlot did *not* must have required thought and decision. Similarly, he would have found it easy to act superior rather than ordinary, but all his life, his friends and acquaintances remarked on his unpretentiousness. He would act like a normal human being and place himself within his social context rather than above it.

Humility—in the strict theological sense of the correct recognition of one's proper place—became for him a central virtue both in art and life. In his philosophy of art, the artist must be humble before the beauty of the universe in order to be able to see it; human pride imposes itself on everything and thus throws a veil over clear vision. In his philosophy of life, the human being must be humble in order to enter into truly human relations; pretention will limit those relations to the roles the parties will be forced to assume. Charlot's visual arts and writings would constantly promote an appreciation of and respect for the humble of the earth, those depreciated by society and history. He himself longed to be as nearly as possible an anonymous artist, a useful member of a group and participant in a movement. But he always stood out as a leader or a threat. Naturally, only the person with a strong sense of identity can achieve humility.

Charlot's reflections on his own upbringing were important, I believe, in the way he reared his own children. His influence was unobtrusive to subliminal. He would explain things to me like the photograph of Truman with the "Dewey Wins" headline, the New Deal, and the Fair Deal very clearly, but using the fewest words possible. He would then wait silently to see whether I needed more explanation or had further questions. If I understood what I wanted to, the conversation stopped. The operation was so quick and simple that I learned without feeling taught. In the summer of 1949, I was drawing a Spanish galleon in three-quarter profile, and my father was watching over my left shoulder. When I drew the profile of the far hull as a straight line, he suggested I give it an outward curve. I asked why, and he said that if I tried it, I would see it worked. It did, and I adopted the bulge as a thoughtless, automatic formula. I did not think further about my father or feel any special debt to him. This episode was typical. He wanted to help us, but did not want us to feel him helping. If we had a problem, he would suggest solutions quietly and without obligation. We felt perfectly free to accept or reject them without consequences for our relationship or for his thinking about us. We felt very much in charge, the center of our own lives and activities. Similarly, he would suggest activities but not insist on them. In the early 1950s, when I was interested in both history and music, he suggested I study Hawaiian music and provided a magazine article on the subject. When I rejected the idea, he never mentioned it again.

To us, our father appeared to be merely on the periphery of our lives, ready to help if necessary. This impression was reinforced by the fact that he did not participate in many of our activities the way the American fathers in our neighborhood did. When I took up boxing, he did not put on the gloves with me until I asked him. His discretion could, however, be felt as distance. I remember thinking, while we were on a family vacation in Northern Minnesota in July 1960, that he really did not understand us children and what we were going through at that moment of our lives. Just then, he took out his sketchbook and did a portrait of each of us. As I looked at them, I thought that he not only understood that moment, but unlike us, he could place it in the context of our whole lives.

Similarly, Charlot did not push us overtly, but provided a rich cultural environment and actively supported any activities we undertook. In 1950, when I was nine years old, he went to some trouble to arrange a public exhibition of my drawings, and my mother helped by taking down my remarks for the captions. I did not make the task easy for him; I refused the first venue, the classroom at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, because it was for children. Without an argument, he then arranged for the exhibition at the Downtown Public Library. When my drawing of my mother was sold, he made an exact copy for my mother to keep. As a child, I borrowed a lot of adult books from the university library. After the librarian with some alarm signed out *All Quiet on the Western Front* to me, she called my father to alert him. He told her I was allowed to read anything I wanted. Similarly, just as Henri protected Jean from a Condorcet mathematics teacher, as seen below, Charlot would protest if he felt his children were being mistreated at school. My third grade teacher told me later that the school knew my father well for his letters and visits. For instance, when I was cutting up in seventh grade, the teacher wrote my parents that they knew I should be allowed to skip a grade, but they had decided against it because it would be bad for my pride. My father wrote them a blistering letter, which, he later told me, ended with the words, "I will keep my children in Catholic schools, *regardless*." This support continued into our adulthood. When I went to college, he told me that as a scholar, I was allowed to read any books that might have been placed on the Roman Catholic Index of Forbidden Books. This position annoyed the college chaplain, who belonged to the extremely authoritarian Opus Dei.

My father genuinely admired our accomplishments and creations. When my brother Peter wrote a pithy freshman paper on *Macbeth*, my father admired its style and pointedness. When Peter received a bad grade because the paper was too short, my father considered that typical of the way the world receives good work. I remember my father leaving my brother Martin's room after viewing a painting he was working on; "If I were Martin," he said, "I'd be jumping up and down with excitement at the discoveries he is making, but he seems very calm about them." My father had been very impressed by the effects Martin was achieving by using successive glazes in the painting of leaves. Martin feels that our father in turn learned from and was influenced by his children (personal communication, July 25, 1998); for instance, Martin's own activity in theatre inspired our father's renewed interest in that field. As a result of such parental interest and support, we children began to consider ourselves little geniuses. This preserved whatever talents we had and instilled in us a strong sense of identity and independence, but it prepared us less for the attitudes of others and the obstacles of the real world.

My father countered our temptations to pride with a strong religious education and a sense of duty towards others. As we grew older, he could use his humor to puncture our balloons. For instance, when in 1972 I wrote a mystery novel and had the manuscript and typescript impressively bound together, my father said, "You'd better get it published now." When I asked why, he said, "After binding it like that." The novel was never published. Once looking at a toddler, my father said to me, "You see why I thought you were all geniuses before you could speak." He explained that little children are so impressive and mysterious that one thinks they must be quite remarkable. Then they start speaking and seem suddenly very ordinary. The remark shows, I believe, how he watched us when we were children and as we grew up.

3.4. ART-MAKING

The first field in which the young Charlot distinguished himself was drawing. His extraordinary talent was recognized at least from 1900, or the age of two, and he was supported and encouraged. Most important for the historian, large numbers of his childhood drawings were kept, first by Charlot's parents, and then by Charlot himself after their deaths. The reason he did this was in all likelihood the same as the one for keeping his childhood poems: their historical importance. As a result, Charlot is one of the few artists—perhaps the only one—whose work can be studied from his earliest childhood until his death on the basis of a large number of examples.⁴⁹ Indeed, enough material is available for full-scale studies on several topics in art history, psychology, and biography. The visual materials are supplemented by Charlot's own statements about his childhood works. He could remember creating a number of them: where he was, what he was trying to achieve, and what he was feeling. Indeed, a number of his themes and some of his major artistic decisions can be traced back to the art-making of his childhood. Charlot himself was interested in his early development:

I think a young man, a very young man I should say, goes through a number of schools nearly in chronological order. We could say that I had an academic period in the narrow sense of the nineteenth century. I had a perhaps not Impressionist, but certainly Post-Impressionist period. And then, those things don't last long, but you do a dozen or so pictures in one style and then you can go to the next. (Interview September 14, 1970)

Charlot was starting his sequence at his youth, but the large amount of surviving material makes possible an even more complete description of his development.

3.4.1. CHARLOT'S VIEW OF CHILDREN'S ART

Charlot was always interested in the artwork of other children. I remember him giving a lecture on children's art illustrated with slides; he discussed the examples with all the seriousness and acuity he brought to his lectures on the Great Masters. I and the rest of the audience were impressed by how much he could see in the works and how much more we ourselves could see after listening to him. He ended, as often, with a joke at his own expense. He showed a slide of one of Martin's childhood paintings that seemed a complete chaos of dots and splashes. He had been baffled by it and approached his son diplomatically, "Well, Martin, that's very interesting. You must have enjoyed painting it," etc.; but it quickly became clear that he did not know what to make of it. "But papa," Martin then said, "it's me surfing!" We could then see amid all the splashes the tiny figure of a smiling child surfing towards the viewer. Charlot had made the point that children's art requires adults and even professors of art to make an effort.

I also heard my father lecture on art to a group of kindergarteners. He didn't talk down to them—he could have given the same lecture to artists—but he concentrated on the most basic and difficult topic: what is art and what is the value of their art-making? Unfortunately neither of the above lectures were audiotaped. Of the second, I remember my father holding in his hand a wooden fish that had been

made by one of the students. He closed his eyes and turned it over in his hand. When he did that, he said, he could feel that he was touching something that went beyond a practical purpose, that the interest of the person who made it was more than just making something that could be used for something else. That special activity, that special kind of making, was the realm of art. It was a whole world beyond the practical one that the children could explore, in fact were exploring in their class. And he could assure them that the exploration was worthwhile, that they would learn things and experience things that were available nowhere else. He talked for about twenty minutes, and the children hung on his every word. He was obviously speaking very intimately to them, and after he finished, the children rose from the floor and returned with very thoughtful expressions to their work tables.

Charlot showed the same respect for children in his illustrations of children's books. Because he felt children were good artists and intelligent people, he felt they deserved art of the highest quality in their books. They would understand good art, and it would appeal to them. He was distressed when editors and others wanted to talk down to children both in the text and the illustrations. For instance, a panel in *Two Little Trains* (1949) reads:

The moon shone down on a gleaming track,
And the two little trains going West;
And they hurried along and heard the song
Of a black man singing in the West.

Charlot's first illustration was a magnificent head of a singing black man rising above the range of mountains in the background. The editors were afraid that children would be frightened by the image, thinking it was an approaching giant, and demanded that Charlot change the panel. He did not like the anodyne alternative—the moon shines over the sleeping children—and was sorry to lose his beautiful drawing and have the child readership treated so disrespectfully.

Charlot was interested in children's art as a subject of intellectual enquiry—an interest closely connected to the one he felt in the psychology of art. In his first published article on the subject, "Prológo como Presentación de un Grupo de Grabadores en Madera," he showed he was acquainted with the contemporary interest in and discussion of the subject.⁵⁰ The new interest in children's art, he wrote, was part of the reaction against a conventional academicism that resulted in a rejection of all that was not pure spontaneity. This led to a renewed study and better understanding of forms of art that were supposed to be less traditional: "art de peuples ou d'individus simples: art nègre et art enfantin" 'the art of peoples and simple individuals: African art and children's art.'⁵¹ Unmentioned but a subject of Charlot's own study was the art of the mentally ill. In other words, Charlot was aware of all that is called Outsider Art today. Charlot had a much more professional understanding of so-called primitive art; it had its own traditions, conventions, and formulas. Similarly, he wanted a more clear-eyed, stringent appreciation of children's art.

First, children's art had to be appreciated and enjoyed, the delectation mentioned by Poussin in his definition of art. To do that, the viewer had to approach children's art with an open mind, seeing it for

what it was and not imposing preconceptions or requirements on it. First, children's art should not be considered merely:

une promesse ou un commencement. C'est un art clos en soi, avec ses règles propres, ses qualités et ses défauts, non les premiers pas dans l'art d'un individu qui développera ce don logiquement au travers de l'adolescence et de l'âge mûr. 'a promise and a beginning. It is an art closed in on itself, with its own rules, its qualities and defects, not the first steps in the art of an individual who will develop this gift logically through adolescence and maturity.'

In fact, there is a brusque rupture between children's art and the child's first attempts at "serious" art, which lose their spontaneity in an attempt to emulate academic formulas used by adults: "To look at children's art is to realize what we have irretrievably lost" (September 14, 1966). Only the real artist can overcome this break from the art of childhood: "y no regresará sino muy tarde, como se ve en la obra de los grandes maestros a la espontaneidad de sus primeros intentos" 'and [the individual] will return only much later, as seen in the work of the great masters, to the spontaneity of his first attempts.' The danger of teachers is, therefore, that they inhibit the spontaneity of the child, both in responding to a natural object to be depicted—or an artwork to be copied—and also in creating a means of expression for his response. Instead the teacher imposes a set of ready-made conventions and formulas, stifling the child's necessary freedom: "Not to know is in his case a positive force" (September 14, 1966); "High school work, when it is genuine, appears less secure than that of the younger painters. A gray mood informs most of the best works" (May 7, 1963).

The enclosed world of children's art is the result of the child's stage in life, and thus an adult cannot pretend to make children's art. Charlot then defines the good qualities and defects of children's art. Positively, the child has "*une excellente idée du beau*" 'an excellent idea of the beautiful' ("UN EXCELENTE CONCEPTO DE LA BELLEZA" in the Spanish). This comes, as all will remember, from "l'intensité, dans la vraie enfance, des sensations physiques" 'the intensity, in authentic infancy, of physical sensations.' Those sensations are new and have not been dulled by use; even more important, they are not utilitarian, but are used for the purpose of pure investigation.⁵² As a result, the child finds everything beautiful. He has not accepted society's view of what is beautiful and important; unlike the adult, he finds beauty "où elle est en réalité, c'est-à-dire partout" 'where it is in reality, that is, everywhere.'⁵³

In the same way, the child has a good sense of the materials he uses. He does not try to force them or use tricks with them. This technical simplicity results in a legibility that is connected to the child's simplicity of vision. The child has an innate taste, a sense of line and proportion that is truly artistic as opposed to a trained skill. The same quality can be found in some so-called primitive art. The work is truly spontaneous: no extraneous, adult preoccupations interpose themselves between the fresh perception of the object and its representation.

As to defects, the child lives in a world of objects that he sees as isolated; he does not have a view of the world that enables him to relate them to each other. As a result, there is "*le défaut de dignité*

dans la conception” ‘the lack of dignity in the conception.’ That is, the child cannot coordinate the objects represented toward a purpose or message. The child is limited to the descriptions of objects, which is only the first step in art. Art should communicate the beauty of an idea, which is the ultimate measure of the beauty of the work of art. Similarly, the child’s vision is subjective and limited to his childish view of the world. This quality is in fact a part of the appreciated originality of children’s art. The ideal would be to combine the advantages of children’s and adult art:

Pour moi, il me semble que si l’innocence technique pouvait être jointe à une expérience relativement longue de la vie qui communique à chaque objet, et spécialement aux êtres, la plus-value d’une longue chaîne de souvenirs et permet d’établir entre eux de fructueuses relations et comparaisons, la perfection serait bien près d’être atteinte.

‘For me, it seems that if the technical innocence could be joined to a relatively long experience of life, which communicates to each object, and especially living beings, the extra-value of a long chain of memories and permits one to establish between them fruitful relations and comparisons, perfection would be very near to being attained.’

Accordingly, Charlot praised “the Chac Mool reliefs, which are so richly descriptive and impetuously youthful” (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 321). The American artist Franklin Watkins wrote Charlot on January 12, 1934: “I saw some of your lovely things at the Print Club. Your forms give one ideas and their colour world recalled to me my colour delights as a child, but now they are more stirring—but perhaps that was your science.”

Charlot’s view of children’s art is less romantic than that of many of his contemporaries. The adult qualities of reason, coherence, and communication were central to his own art-making, and he could find sufficient challenges to convention in the adult arts of other cultures. He was not convinced by the willed childishness and self-conscious awkwardness of styles based on children’s art, although for a time in the 1930s, he enjoyed the work of Paul Klee, the master of the genre. Charlot’s only experiment was done in 1921, when he was exploring a wide range of options. *Garden Park with Blue Chair*, discussed below, is in fact a sophisticated work. On the subject of children’s art, Charlot characteristically acquainted himself with the opinions of others, but ultimately consulted his own experience and thinking to form his personal view.

3.4.2. THE EVIDENCE OF CHARLOT’S OWN WORK

The above view of children’s art contains much that can be documented from Charlot’s own childhood works. The acuteness of childhood perception, which “chacun de nous se rappelle” ‘each of us remembers,’ is a constant in Charlot’s thinking, along with the appreciation and proper use of materials. Charlot could see in his childhood work adult art problems like point of view and the relationship between line and color. A more complicated subject is the idea that a child’s art forms a separate world and cannot be understood as a stage in a logical progression of artistic development. Charlot argued that

there was in fact an important rupture or break between the spontaneous childish works and the first “serious” works, which are attempted copies of adult formulas usually under external influences like teachers. In the early 1970s, I was puzzled by the view expressed in the article because Charlot’s work seemed to me to form just the sort of logical development he denied; moreover, I did not see a childish moment of academic awkwardness. I brought this up to my father and made the following note:

I told pop he’d written somewhere that children’s art must be thought of as separate from an adult’s art, that they were two very different things, but that I thought that wasn’t the case in his own work, that his children’s work was very much connected to his late work. He said he couldn’t remember that locus and wouldn’t agree with the position as I had stated it. (Tabletalk late September or early October 1976)

In my later study, I did, however, find two drawings that fit Charlot’s description of an academic rupture: *Schoolboys in Street* of 1909 and *Man with Bleeding Pig*, probably of 1913–1914. Both were “homework for drawing class at Condorcet” and the latter was an assigned subject. In the notes he made in the early 1970s, “CHARLOT on Early French Work,” he seemed to disown these works alone of all his childhood productions. The drawings themselves seem inoffensive to the viewer and form only a very small part of his production at the time; but they seem to have represented for Charlot a threat to his creativity. His response to that threat was the basis of his description of the separation of a child’s art from that of the adult—he seems to want to throw up a wall to protect his center of spontaneity against the threat of a false maturity. Later in life, he could emphasize the continuity of his own production, which seems in historical perspective its dominant characteristic.

Charlot apparently started with adult subjects from his earliest dated work of 1900: on the same sheet as the running ostrich is a drawing of a bottle on a table. This still life was in all likelihood an emulation of his mother’s art-making in her studio. Charlot himself, when I showed him the sheet in 1972, was more impressed by the bottle than the ostrich. He said that the ostrich was typical of children’s art, but the bottle showed that he was really looking at objects in the world and trying to represent them; the bottle reminded him of the work of Morandi (Tabletalk February 17, 1972).

Similarly, Charlot was provided very early with teachers—first his mother and his English governess, then the private teachers his mother engaged, then the teachers at his school, and finally the professors of the Beaux-Arts, who corrected the drawings of informal students who worked in the corridors rather than in the studios themselves. In his essay (1924), he mentions “influences extérieures (du professeur, principalement)” ‘external influences (of the professor, principally)’ that must be removed from consideration before one can see the child’s art on its own.

Another very strong external influence on Charlot was his early introduction to a large variety of artworks, both originals and reproductions, which made their presence felt in his early drawings. From an early age, he looked at artworks carefully and copied them. He also studied with unusual intensity the history of art. That is, his strong response to artworks prompted him to study art thoroughly. Charlot recognized the importance of this study for his own creativity: “Some painters don’t need it for their art. I

needed everything for mine” (Tabletalk February 6, 1972). He stated in his lecture, “An Artist Looks Back” of March 8, 1972:

I welcome influences...I cannot imagine a man without influences. The baby who grows up in the family has influences, if it was only the father and the mother. The painter who grows up as a painter starts as a baby painter, if you want, and has to choose, or sometimes somebody chooses for him, or geography chooses for him, his papa and his mama as far as art styles go. I think that a man who would say, “I have no influences; I have no papa and mama as a painter; I’m a self-made painter,” would be a monster... Because influences were received by me when I was very young, I have one thing for which I’m grateful, and that is, I was born and raised in Paris.

Charlot’s response to great art was independent from the first:

At the Louvre, I chose my masters. I spoke of the Italian primitives, but perhaps I was even more at ease...strangely I would say not in awe, I never was in awe. I was already a conceited fellow. (ibid.)

Charlot always felt more a colleague than a follower of great painters and, as such, could be critical; for instance, when his childhood reaction to the *Mona Lisa* was negative:

Then there was glass on top of it, and I would only look at myself as soon as I was high enough to be a little over the lower part of the frame, and I didn’t like what I saw. (ibid.)

Charlot always considered Leonardo more of a theoretician than a practitioner of art. As discussed below, Charlot regularly criticized artists whose work he revered, such as Grünewald, the illuminators of Aztec codices, and the painters and sculptors at Chich’en Itza (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: e.g., 262, 285, 296). His schoolboy marginalia demonstrate that he was equally critical of writers and critics. Conversely, Charlot’s independence of mind enabled him to appreciate artists who were being unrecognized or even ignored, like the Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada. He could recognize the sophistication of so-called primitive art because he was not prejudiced by the conventional views of such cultures. My brother Martin emphasized how different Charlot was in this from ordinary critics, who too often follow the consensus.

Copying the works of the Masters was an important part of classical art education and one Charlot used himself when he became a teacher. He continued the practice all his life, an important connection between his childhood and his later career. Copying was a regular part of the art instruction he received from his father and his English governess while working in *Juvenilia* 1904, as detailed below. He seems to have continued the practice on his own, copying from book illustrations or art objects he saw in the course of living. His childhood art teachers had him copy other artists in oil to the point where “nowadays I must say I have a hard time, unless I remember the circumstances, in knowing which of those early panels are copies of other painters and which were done directly from nature” (Interview September 14, 1970). Copying plaster casts of classical sculpture was a regular exercise in Charlot’s art

classes at Condorcet as it was also at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He copied the codices from the Goupil Collection, first from the photographs in the *Atlas* and then from the originals. He reported that as an adolescent:

I would go alone to the Louvre, but I used to go every weekend and I would get in trouble with the guards because they didn't want me to sit down to copy things because I didn't have a permit as a copyist, so whatever drawings I made from the Old Masters I had to do standing and sometimes I got very tired indeed. (Interview September 14, 1970)

From 1926 to 1928, Charlot worked as a professional copyist of the Mayan artworks at Chich'en Itza, and in Hawai'i, he made an extensive series of petroglyph rubbings.

Charlot emphasized that art-making was a psycho-physical activity that involved the whole human being. To copy an artwork was a means of entering into the mind of the other artist; by reproducing the action of the art-making, one could understand the original act of creation. He described the process while discussing his copying of Hawaiian petroglyphs:

it's like you go to the Louvre or to the Metropolitan Museum and you copy the Old Masters. You don't pretend that you are an Old Master. But by repeating the lines, the proportions, and so on, you gather something that the guys who did the things—it may be Titian, it may be Poussin, it may be the old Hawaiian—had I wouldn't say in mind, but the very rhythm, the very rhythm of their hand, of their wrist, and so on, is repeated as you copy the petroglyphs. (Interview March 26, 1978)

Paradoxically, this deep understanding of other artists enabled Charlot to liberate himself from their influence. They were clearly placed in his consciousness and could no longer act on his subconscious or unconscious. Accordingly, Charlot could distinguish the original artwork in his copies from his own creative response to it. Discussing his 1921 copies of eighteenth-century illustrations, he stated:

when you look at the book, there is no doubt that—a book of copies, my copies—there is no doubt that it is done along certain lines by a young man who understood Analytical Cubism. But nevertheless, for me, that thing, like the copies of Greco, was a way of understanding eighteenth-century rococo masters. Of course, in retrospect there is perhaps more of myself in *my* El Grecos and *my* Bouchers than of these Old Masters, but I learned a lot, really, by copying their things. (Interview October 18, 1970)

That is, Charlot inevitably changed whatever he copied. For instance, a drawing in *Juvenilia* (54b recto) has been plausibly identified by Lewis Andrews as based on Titian's preparatory drawing, *The Battle of Cadore*, in the Louvre.⁵⁴ A number of details coincide: riders with round helmets and whips instead of swords or spears, a bridge/road broadening on the left, and rock formations on the side. Charlot has not merely copied the drawing, but responded to its tremendous forward impetus and expressed it by increasing almost to a vertical the diagonal steepness of the charge. Moreover, he has

noticed the broadening of the opening of the bridge out of which Titian's riders will charge and has expanded it further. Rather than merely copying, Charlot is interacting with his model and receiving its communication. Moreover, he learned from it. His first fresco, *The Massacre in the Main Temple* of 1922–1923 will describe a similarly furious charge of horsemen, and in his masterpiece of 1921, *L'Amitié*, the exaggerated widening of the arm of a chair will be a central compositional device. As a child, Charlot looked at artworks the way he looked at plants; they both inspired him to personal creativity.

Charlot's artistic personality was too strong for him to copy an artwork without changing it unless he made a special effort as in his Mexican archeological work and Hawai'i petroglyph rubbings. For instance, he based the *Deposition from the Cross* of his *Chemin de Croix* on an early French painting in the Louvre (Morse 1976: 9): "Then, in fact, I felt I was just stealing it. Now I don't see that it is so close." Charlot's work always looks different. As a result, an influence recorded by Charlot can be otherwise unrecognizable; for instance, he stated that Picasso's *La Soupe* (1903) had influenced the relationship between mother and daughter in his own *First Steps*. Charlot was happy to acknowledge influences, so the historian must take him seriously whenever he denies them.

Copying was naturally not the final goal of a creative artist. Charlot early began to use the knowledge he had gained from that practice, creating, for instance, a picture-story life of Napoleon based on the photographs in the *Atlas* of the Goupil Collection. His intimate knowledge of Mexican Indian and Hawaiian art was important in his development of a style appropriate to the depiction of subjects from those cultures. Charlot also developed more than other artists the genre of portraits of artworks, which he distinguished clearly from copies. These portraits show the artwork itself and also express Charlot's response to it. For instance, his picture of an Egyptian statue in the Louvre reveals the fear the work inspired in him (*Juvenilia* 1904 03c recto). Alongside his archeological renderings at Chich'en Itza, Charlot painted a number of portraits of Maya artworks that form a separate group.⁵⁵ Charlot produced a large number of such portraits of Mexican, Hawaiian, and Papua New Guinean artworks. Such portraits honor the artwork and provide a quasi-portrait of the artist. They are also a means of intercultural exploration. *Still life with Tarascan Statuette* (1975, checklist number 1345) creates a framework of two extremes found in nature: a dark clay wall and a translucent white grape. The clay statuette is then contrasted with an Asian celadon vase, but they can both be seen as deriving from nature.⁵⁶ Finally, such paintings relate non-Western artworks to Charlot's own œuvre and assimilate them into it. Charlot was seeing his own art in a world-historical context.

A habit of classical art is using references to previous treatments of a subject. In following this practice, Charlot would seek out sometimes obscure predecessors he could use as a tradition, either positively or negatively. Two examples are Gustave Doré's illustrations for Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, which Charlot studied for his own (1941), and the statue of Our Lady of La Salette, which he used for Paul Claudel's book on the subject.⁵⁷ In rare cases, Charlot makes the reference obvious to add a layer of meaning to the work, as in his 1925 visual connection between the clothing of Indian women and the couture of Paul Poiret, described above. A curiosity is Charlot's exaggerated use of references in a

proposal for the mural Calvary at St. Leonard's Center; Charlot was angry that his first and better proposal had been rejected.⁵⁸

Charlot was unusual in Western art history in being both a practicing artist and a professional art scholar: "Since I was a small boy I kind of mixed up a sort of scholarship—scholar approach I would say—to an artist's approach" (Lesley and Hollis interview 1961: 13). Charlot joked that such scholarly breadth was particularly odd with his background; on a critic's claims for Matisse: "Such a pragmatic knowledge of history and geography in a Frenchman—and, at that, a painter—is hardly credible..." (AA I: 371). When I discussed that point with the Chinese artist Tseng Yu-ho (Betty Ecke), she told me that the conventional Western opposition of creative art to scholarship puzzled her because they were considered mutually supportive in Chinese art. For Charlot, the link between creativity and scholarship was provided by the idea of tradition:

I think that tradition, which after all is the subject of the history of art, is the thing that can link both the practicing artist and the writer on art. We have to remember that tradition, even though it is in books, and there is a wealth of references to it in lectures, is really a living thing without which the artist cannot do. It does not mean he has to memorize dates, but it means that somewhere in his training he has to look at good originals and gather and absorb through those originals the living tradition of the old masters. (September 1946: 6)

Charlot continued to study art history until the end of his life. In 1977 and 1978, he was doing research on Bernini—whom he had neglected earlier in life—because he found that artist was indispensable for understanding French artists and architects who had interested Charlot since childhood. He said that as one gets older and deeper into the history of art, one realizes that one cannot dispense with artists one thought one could ignore when younger.

As an artist, Charlot's study of art history was based on works rather than theories. As a result, he differed often from the consensus of the field. He also recognized historical differences from his own ideas. For instance, Charlot thought he had to be a good person to do good art, but confessed himself puzzled by the facts that the morally worst popes had been the best art patrons and the reprehensible George IV had stimulated a whole new style with his Bath Pavilion. Similarly, Charlot could change his mind as his evaluation of works changed, for instance, those of Matisse. He could also be convinced. He thought W. A. Visser t'Hooft was "crazy" when he started reading his *Rembrandt and the Gospel* (1958), but found him right in the end. Similarly, the contradictions in Charlot's thinking on some theoretical questions, like the existence of a hierarchy of subject, show his dynamic relation to tradition: he was always testing his ideas against actual artworks and his own experience. Charlot's writing flowed from the same person as his art.

The connection of creativity to knowledge was, however, indirect:

Yet paradoxically the fact that his work has an appearance distinct from that of the masters gives it the earmark of the true follower. For the masters are such because they did not copy. (*AA I*: 62 f.)

All he knows, from Altamira to Miro, will be ingeniously put to work in pictures whose only defect will be a lack of creativeness.

True creation must start from nothing... This emptying of himself, this vacuum cleaning which is the first step of creation, is the absolute opposite of the data gathering and file ordering of the critical type. (*AA I*: 50 f.; also 278 ff., 339–342)

If influences are not processed through the artist's own creativity, the result is mere pastiche. Moving directly from knowledge to production—recommended by some Classical critics (e.g., Reynolds 1961: 189)—involves merely the rational mind. A space must be created between the two stages in which other levels of the psyche are given room to play. Charlot's recognition of the necessary mental blank before creation resembles Chinese writings on art, which he refers to for several points in his writings.⁵⁹ He is describing, certainly, his own experience, and his statements are paralleled by those of other artists. For instance, the composer Richard Strauss stated that when he found himself blocked in his attempts to invent a musical theme, he would fill his mind at night with all the relevant information and then go to sleep; the needed theme usually appeared in his mind the next morning.

No influences inhibited the spontaneity of Charlot's childhood art. On the contrary, he looked at artworks the way he looked at natural objects, assimilating them all into his own verve and vision, which shows the unusual strength of his artistic personality. His Egyptian god from the Louvre has nothing Egyptian about its style: Charlot has absorbed it completely into his own style to express his fearful response to it. Similarly, he was exposed early to works with geometric compositions, but that he used one in his earliest dated drawing of 1900 shows that his sense of geometry was innate; it was simply supported and extended by his study of other works. Charlot's viewing of his first Impressionist work, a painting by Eugène Boudin, was certainly a revealing experience. But he then went through the creative process himself, starting with his own observation and developing his own works along the lines of his own sensibility. An indication of Charlot's habitual processing of other art is that—although some influences were immediate, like that of Japanese art—there was usually some time between Charlot's encounter with a work or works and his use of them. Indeed, all his life Charlot would be able to absorb any influences into his own observation, synthesis, and storytelling. Charlot's childhood art, therefore, forms a characteristic unity with his later life: throughout are found in ample proportions observation, imagination, study of other artworks, and creativity.

As long as he lived, Charlot was exploring the multifarious phenomena of art and art-making. His was truly a life of art; conversely, his art was that of a full human being, who had a family and responsibilities near and far. Indeed, from the very beginning, art and art-making were part of life as he experienced it: he could watch his mother at work in her studio. Art was something that was produced by a living person:

my mother, of course, painted and I would see her doing a painting and I knew that paintings were not ready-made, that they had to be done by hand, and very early I tried my hand at doing paintings. (Interview September 14, 1970)

Well, my mother was a painter and she had a little studio in our summer house where she painted. She was an easel painter, of course, and as I grew up she would make portraits of me. I was a model, an artist's model, before I became an artist. But I really didn't know better. She had the brushes and the paint there, and when I found which end of the brush to use I did use it. (Lesley and Hollis 1961)

In his thinking and scholarship, Charlot always connected the art to the artist, a human being living in a world.

3.4.3. DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS

Although a child, Charlot created art that can be studied with the methods developed for adult works. In fact, from his earliest dated drawing, he was consciously setting himself artistic problems and devising solutions for them. As seen above, he felt that a child's production should be appreciated in itself rather than as a mere stage on the way to later works. That is, his childhood works can be appreciated as finished creations that achieved their goal. Similarly, his earliest paintings in Mexico should be appreciated for themselves:

JPC: Were those your first attempts to deal with Mexican subject matter?

JC: They were not attempts, sir; they were realizations. (Interview May 14, 1970)

Charlot thought some of his childhood works were good and some bad, but they were all realized works. In fact, from his childhood and through the rest of his life, few corrections can be found in his drawings. Charlot could use the word *attempt* for his work, but I remain mindful that each of his works has its individual value.

Charlot's family accepted him at a very young age as an artist and encouraged and helped him; they also collected and preserved his works. As a result, a large body of his childhood artwork survives, although much has been lost, for instance, his first recorded drawing—a dog running up a hill. The first dated drawings are from 1900, when he was at most two years old, and are already remarkably accomplished. The drawings also reveal that Charlot's family was valuing his work. He is not working casually on some discarded piece of paper. A sheet, twelve inches wide and eight long, has been folded in half, making a booklet of four eight-inch by six-inch pages. Charlot has done a separate drawing on each page; that is, he already understands the concept of a booklet. The drawings are of subjects that he will use frequently in the next years and represent some of his main artistic endeavors.

The first page is the bridled, running ostrich mentioned above. The ostrich seems to have broken away from its trainer and is running free and happy. The drawing has a wonderful verve; it is also composed geometrically. From its head to its left foot, the ostrich forms a diagonal that expresses dynamic movement. The reins fly horizontally behind the head, suggesting the speed with which the

ostrich is running and recalling the horizontals of the top and bottom of the page. A parallelogram can be formed by tracing lines from each end of the reins to the feet directly below and then between the feet. The drawing is clearly that of a child—albeit not that of a normal two-year-old. The splayed running legs are done, not from observation, but according to a mental formula that Charlot will use also on pages two and four. Nonetheless, this is a child with an innate tendency to expressive geometric composition:

I don't like freedom as such. At least I like a sort of limited freedom. I would say even in my inspiration I'm not wild and woolly, but the inspiration is a sort of ordered inspiration. I think in my easel pictures as in my mural painting there is a quota of architectural thought and that is the link between the two. In mural painting you receive an architecture, you have to cope with it. In easel painting you create your own architecture. (Lesley and Hollis 1961)

Charlot's remarks on this drawing reveal the strength of the emotion behind it. Similarly, during World War I, he will feel intense emotion on seeing wild flowers on the battlefield, as seen below. That Charlot expressed his emotions on both these occasions in geometric composition and analysis shows how deeply all these elements of his psyche were attached. From childhood, Charlot expressed himself holistically.

On the second page is drawn another ostrich, perhaps partially traced through the paper from the one on the first page, a practice found in the next years. This ostrich is not free—a large burden has been placed on its back to which the downward sloping reins are attached—and is walking in unhappy captivity rather than reveling in escape. The ostrich's body does not describe a full diagonal, and the heavy vertical burden further minimizes the sense of movement. This drawing shows that the effects of the first were not accidental. The free ostrich is portrayed very differently from the enslaved, burden-bearing one. On the other hand, Charlot has tried to improve on the eye: in the first drawing, the eye is a mere dot; in the second, the eye is enlarged and provided with a brow.

On the third page, Charlot has drawn a still life of a corked bottle on a table. The table top and side are seen in profile as lines, the side sloping curiously (perhaps a table cloth). The outline of the bottle with its cork has been drawn first. The little bit of perspective on the cork shows that Charlot was working from nature, from observation. The interior of the outline has then been filled in with pencil, with a darker penciling of a circle in the middle to describe the label. On the neck and base of the bottle, Charlot has used vertical lines to fill in the outline, going beyond the outline a little at the bottom. For the body of the bottle, he has tried to suggest its more rounded shape. This is clearly the type of artistic activity Charlot saw in his mother's studio. He himself was impressed with this drawing when he saw it in 1972, thinking that few children that age would be attempting to look so carefully at an object.

The fourth page contains the drawing of a horse running through some woods. Again, Charlot's use of a mental formula can be seen. The horse has only two legs, of the same shape as those on the ostriches; they have simply been placed further apart to fit the horse's body. The reins fly horizontally behind the horse's head, but do not achieve the same compositional effect as on the first page. Moreover, the horse's tail is hanging down; Charlot has not connected that part of the drawing to the motion. The biggest difference in this fourth drawing from the others is the effort to provide a background for the

figure. The two ostriches have some scribbled ground to walk on, and the bottle stands on two lines that suggest a table. On the fourth page, Charlot has drawn his horse and ground and then added the trees behind the horse, trying carefully to stop the lines that fill in the trunks from entering the outline of the horse. The horse's mane, however, has disappeared into those filling lines—a problem of legibility that Charlot would face in other drawings in the next years.

Charlot's parents gave him a commercial ledger to draw in, probably from his father Henri's office supplies. The pages of the ledger are ten-and-a-half inches high and eight inches wide. They are perforated at the binding for easy tearing from the ledger and are numbered in triplicate for the making of multiple copies.⁶⁰ Charlot had the ledger rebound in Hawai'i with a title on the spine, *Juvenilia 1904*. He probably based the date on the fact that the next surviving booklet is dated 1905. However, he pasted onto the back of the front cover a piece of a sheet with his mother's writing: "Jean Charlot 4 ans" "Jean Charlot 4 years"; "4" has been written over the original "5" and both are in the same hand. Charlot would have turned four in February 1902 and six in 1904. The original position or reference of Anne Charlot's note is now undiscoverable. Four dated drawings from 1904 enable us to identify Charlot's style early in that year.⁶¹ These drawings do resemble a few in the ledger.⁶² However, the great majority of the ledger drawings appear older; the hand is clearly even less mature. Indeed many resemble strongly the drawings on the sheet dated 1900, and some appear even older (e.g., 453c verso, 454c verso, 457a recto and verso). The drawing by Henri of *Isabel and John*, Jean with his English governess, watching the Grand Guignol or Punch and Judy Show at the park (16a recto), shows a very tiny boy indeed. I conclude, therefore, that the ledger was used from 1900 (or even earlier) to 1904 and shows Charlot's development over those years. Charlot did not follow the sequence of the pages, but sometimes went backwards and mostly skipped around. A full study of the book would require establishing a chronological sequence for the works; my discussion will be more general, and I will not cite every example.

The artworks in the ledger are immediately impressive for their energy and joy. The child is happy to be drawing and painting and excited to be surrounded by so many beautiful things. The viewer is then impressed by the child's intensity—by the quantity and variety of his production (a trompe l'oeil drawing in an older hand of many sheets of paper on a surface with Charlot's own drawings on them seems to be a picture of his desktop, 54b verso). Finally the viewer becomes aware of how much the child is learning and thinking about art.

The child observes the natural world and the in-door world of still lifes. The household objects are treated like the bottle in the 1900 drawing: Charlot tries to reproduce them as realistically as possible—bottles (85a and b rectos), an oil lamp (91a verso), a bed (09a recto), *Diner* (the different items of a meal and a table holding an arrangement of fruit, 72a verso). He attempts more complicated problems, like perspective drawings of boxes (79c recto) and fish tanks (89a verso and 89b recto)—his good perspective drawing of a convoluted snake was probably not done from observation (89a recto)—and a portrait, perhaps of his grandfather Louis Goupil (91a verso). Charlot carries his observations through several steps. He first draws single examples of global Christmas decorations (86b recto) and then places them in a framework (verso). He then bedecks their global forms unrealistically with flags. He draws a series of globes in a line, their diminishing size suggesting perspective. Finally, he uses that observation

in a free composition of a child making enormous bubbles: their sizes decrease and increase to suggest a tipped circle in space (86a verso), creating a geometric composition of a subject that little lends itself to one.

But the vast majority of Charlot's observations are of the natural world: grasses, flowers, and trees; insects, birds, fish, and quadrupeds. Many of the objects he depicts have a strong numinous character, like his insects (18c verso, 77b recto and c verso; the butterfly by an older hand has none of this character, 39a verso). Charlot had vivid memories of staying at the Villa St. Louis and painting his later landscapes:

It was my grandfather's house, and we went there as a rule in the summer, and as a young child, of course, what I enjoyed was the space, which was more than we had in our Paris apartment. We had what we called *le pré*, which was a large, uncultivated piece of land, vaguely grass in it but not a lawn, and we loved to play in there, my sister, myself, and friends, little friends. And besides the lawn there was, of course, the Seine, which was running right under the property. And on the Seine, there we had ourselves a little boat, and we could go fishing. The Seine was there, and the little fishermen were there, and there was the bridge of La Reine Blanche, which is the mother of St. Louis there, with some little constructions on it. And much later on, of course, I learned that Monet had lived there from in the early 1880s, and I recognized certainly in quite a number of his pictures the same places from the same point of view where I did my first watercolors.

There was a quality, I would say, to the place and to the *plein air* which was so different from Paris and certainly resulted in my appreciating nature and natural forms. I did also some pictures of flowers at the time. My mother, for example, had done some bouquets of flowers in vases, which was about the only way you could get at flowers in Paris, through a florist. But to see the flowers, even field flowers, growing up and connected, tied up to the ground and so on, was a new experience for me because I was really a city boy, a Paris boy.⁶³

The many drawings in the ledger of long blades of grass and flowering bushes growing directly out of the ground are thus the result of Charlot's exploration and discovery. His preference for them over cut flowers arranged in a vase is characteristic of his taste throughout his life. Charlot always saw plants as living and powerful rather than delicate and decorative; the culmination of this view is the fresco he painted in his own living room, *Tropical Foliage* (1957). In his adult paintings, the envased flowers seem to writhe in an agony of protest.

The child also has an impressive imagination. Birds are given enormous tails, and snails enormous shells; hats are wildly beplumed, and shakos sprout from helmets. Fantasy creatures abound, confronting each other like regular animals (as in the well observed 17a verso–17b recto), being ridden, and riding each other. Exotic animals like dromedaries are drawn intact or contribute their curious features to fantastic combinations. Some of these combinations resemble Charlot's description of his

secret gods: human bodies with animal heads (67c recto, 72b recto, 84b recto), animal bodies with human heads (59a verso, 60b verso [a uniformed centaur], 63a recto, 95c recto), or animal bodies so monstrous or threatening that they seem numinous (85c verso, 95a recto, 99a recto).

Charlot's work illustrates his own description of the art of a child in "Prologue ou Présentation":

Il a, de plus, un *goût* remarquable pour choisir, entre de nombreux éléments, l'élément caractéristique que ce soit ligne ou proportion. Les gravures ici contenues en sont la meilleure illustration...Même certitude souveraine dans le choix des lignes, même maîtrise dans le jeu (par contraste ou par similitude) des proportions...

'Moreover, he has a remarkable *taste* for choosing, among numerous elements, the characteristic element, be it line or proportion. The prints in this book are the best illustration of that...The same sovereign certitude in the choice of lines, the same masterfulness in the play of proportions (by contrast or similarity)...

Charlot admired decisiveness in art and treasured it in the work of children. His own earliest lines are seldom erased, overdrawn, or fudged; they are strong and expressive. More important, he clearly delights in drawing. He revels in the calligraphic swirls of a cock's tail in the tall grass (05c verso), of smoke rising from a steamboat (15b verso), and of the wind that animates flags and kites (16c verso–17a recto). The same calligraphy will be used for wind and smoke in *Two Little Trains* (1949). Practicing penmanship down a page, meticulously touching but staying within the lines, he distracts himself with small doodles at the bottom, then suddenly explodes in angry swirls, pressing his pencil hard against the page (87a verso; compare 85c recto).

The ledger provides evidence that Charlot was receiving regular instruction in drawing from his father and his English governess—and in all likelihood his mother as well. He could be given a model to copy on the same sheet. His governess draws an acorn, and he goes over the outline in brown pencil; he then attempts an acorn on his own; and finally places a number of them on his child's formula of a tree (16a verso). With his left hand, he traces his right and then tries to copy it freehand (35b verso–35c recto); he traces and then draws a pair of child's scissors (39c recto). Charlot likes to elaborate on his models: he adds tassels to a trumpet (52c recto) and lengthens the tail of his father's drawing of a bird (63a recto); his exaggerations of the model can be grandiose (87b verso–87c recto). A regular exercise was to trace a drawing onto the verso of the sheet; a whole page of formal models is provided on 58c recto and traced carefully on the verso. A very complicated example is that of a man in a top hat who, placed horizontally, becomes a cannon (73c). Again Charlot can add to the model—the whole lower part of the body and a floor on 72b. Charlot's line, though childish, can be stronger and more expressive than the model he is tracing (20b). His version of a North American Indian (15b recto)—done in profile as a model probably by his father (70 a verso)—has turned full-front and grimaces as frighteningly as the Egyptian statue (Charlot may also have been expressing an impression received while viewing Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show). A more difficult exercise was to reproduce a model in another part of the book without having it before one's eyes, a test of one's visual memory. The model of a bunch of cherries (64a recto) can be found reproduced on a number of pages and appears in larger compositions. Some

shorthand formulas for objects, like stick figures and the bayoneted rifles (80b verso), were in all likelihood taught to Charlot. Distant birds in flight are represented by two arching lines resembling a capital M. Charlot will innovate on this only in his 1905 sketchbook (number 6, *sommet de la montagne*): the two arching lines are detached and made more individual and representational; he will vary them further in his marginal illustrations of Moreau's *Contes à ma Sœur* done in 1911. Charlot can learn a device even when he applies it to another subject. An older hand has drawn a bird in the three steps of picking up a ring in its beak (06a recto); Charlot himself shows three different steps of playing hopscotch (85a recto), an artistic device he used in his mature work and discussed fully in his writings on art (*Pictures and Picture-Making*).

The same combination of learning and creation can be found in his coloring. He colors the drawings of others (04c verso–05b recto, 81a recto); both Henri and Jean seem to be working from colorful stickers of birds (81b–82b). Charlot makes his own pencil outlines and colors them in, sometimes to special effect: the spattering of coloring on a bird adds to the sense of his movement (71a verso–b recto). The horse and rider have pencil outlines, but the trees are pure color (72a recto). He uses pencils of blue and purple to do a colored drawing (78c verso). He sews blue and yellow thread onto a picture of a helmet and feather (52b verso), his first mixed media work.

But his great discovery was that he could draw with color without making an outline in pencil. Charlot remembered the moment but placed it years too late:

I do remember a few things. One of them was my discovery that you could do purer painting and it represented something. That is, up to then I had done things in pencil and then I had colored them, and the two operations were distinct. You start drawing and then you put color on. But one day I took a brush and I started drawing with the brush and that was a tremendous impact. I still remember it now, that question of working with pure color instead of the gray of the pencil, and it allowed me to do things which today look just the same as any children's drawings, but at the time looked to me painterly, even though I didn't have the word at hand to describe it. So that was certainly a discovery and maybe it is a time when I found that I was a painter.⁶⁴

Charlot added more details in "An Artist Looks Back" of March 8, 1972:

I remember that it was a moment when I discovered the difference between drawing and painting. Up to then, I had been drawing, and drawing very well. I could already infuriate my English governess by making portraits of her. One day I was sick. I was in bed. I had only brush and watercolor, and so I started painting directly in color, and I got very excited. I got so excited that I got the fever. I remember that.

The discovery seems to have taken place in the ledger, and the subject was the cook in Poissy on her way to market with her large basket:

the cook *would* go to market in Poissy with a basket, very much the way the Mexican cooks go to market with their baskets. And my first color painting without preparatory drawing that gave me that new sensuous approach to art was of the cook and her basket. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Charlot wanted first to depict the basket, which had horizontal bands of color. On 75a verso, he began by drawing an outline in pencil of the basket and the first bands. With watercolors, he started coloring within the lines and then simply painted the color in the shape of the bands, but without first drawing the outline in pencil. He then did a very wet, drippy version of the basket on the same page above his first attempt. Some nonrepresentational painted lines on 77a recto and 74c verso may show him experimenting with the making of lines with pure color. On 75a recto, he painted a very fine picture of the basket seen from below, its colored bands and base rendered purely in color. Below this, Charlot painted a vibrant image of the cook holding the basket in a garden with a tree, ground, and grass, all in pure unoutlined color. Charlot had discovered that he could draw with color. He then recreated some of his old subjects in color (07b verso–17409a recto)—trees, people, birds, quadrupeds, fish, bunches of cherries, snakes in the grass, and a horseman in the woods. Charlot’s excitement is obvious—his blue sun fills its page much more magnificently (08a recto) than the drawing of the same subject (09a verso). Drawing with color would become a characteristic of Charlot’s art. In his *Traité de Peinture* (1920), Charlot would write, “La jonction de couleurs produit la ligne” ‘The *junction* of colors produces the *line*.’

Another discovery can be found in Charlot’s ledger that will be important for his future work. Charlot makes an elaborate, geometric drawing of what looks like an ornament on a table (84a verso). The outline is in blue pencil, and Charlot then colors the areas in blue, red, and yellow pencil. However, a centrally placed ornamental shape, like an upside-down ace of spades, has not been colored in; it has been left as a reserve. As the white of the paper, its tone is higher than that of the colored areas, so it is very striking. Charlot has already discovered the power of reserves, which he will use in his watercolors and then transfer to fresco.

At the same time that Charlot was using the ledger, he was being taught to read and write. Although most of that instruction must have taken place elsewhere, it did intrude on the ledger and become connected to the artwork. Also, his governess used drawings to teach English vocabulary: the appropriate English and French words are written below the picture (14b recto–15a verso). Throughout his career, Charlot would in fact integrate writing into his visual art—a rebus letter of July 8, 1909, to his father being an extreme example—and the coordination of text and illustration on the page was one of his major interests in book design (conversely, he would coordinate his visual art with his dramatic literature). Charlot practices his penmanship in the ledger (87a verso) and explores different forms of letters (03b recto), an interest in type that would continue throughout his life. Charlot learns from his father how to turn letters into amusing stick figures (66a verso, 79a verso) and decorates an *A* with flowery appendages (68b recto). He integrates writing into his design: as a decorative element (03b recto), on a sign (93a verso), on scrolls (59a verso, 59b recto), as copied inscriptions with antique letter forms (62b recto, 70a recto). Charlot will use scrolls and inscriptions prominently in his later work. Charlot learns to write his first name and begins to sign his drawings (11a verso, 15b recto, 68a recto,

compare 66c recto). Charlot learns the initials of his family members, reversing the C, and labels with them images that seem to be part of a story (02, 04a, 75b recto–c recto); Charlot's governess labeled her narrative drawings as well (11a recto). Charlot very early explains the story behind some of his drawings to his father, who writes down the information on the same page (40a recto–40b recto). Both Henri and Jean were interested in the design coordination of text and illustration: Henri draws a picture and places false writing under it; Jean copies the page on the verso (93b). A large number of Charlot's drawings are carefully placed on the page, and he uses for the first time devices found later in his book illustrations. For instance, he places a picture within a picture (03b recto; a horse's bridle, darkened and thickened, encloses an unrelated picture), a device found in his illustrations for Paul Claudel. For Charlot, learning to write was clearly an esthetic activity and involved a wide range of now unidentifiable sources; in his poem *Et je suis aussi attelé au joug* of September 1916, his image of "l'enfant qui s'amuse aux majuscules grotesques d'une Apocalypse qu'il ne peut lire" 'the child who amuses himself with the grotesque capital letters of an Apocalypse that he cannot read' is probably based on a childhood memory. Writing also involved Charlot's sense of play.

Charlot felt that his artistic play with his father was an important influence on his own art (Interview September 15, 1970). Henri provided models for tracing, including some trees in Asian style (58b recto), showed Jean how to do profiles and eyes in profile (39a recto, Charlot's version on 38a verso; Charlot gave me the same lesson when I was a child), and explained the complicated visual phenomenon of a three-sided mirror (87a recto). Henri would play art games: a house on one page would have cut out windows through which people on the next page could be seen (31a and b rectos). Charlot later played this game with his own children. The most important lesson Henri taught Jean—seconded by his governess (11 recto, 13b recto)—was the use of art for narrative. Henri would tell stories and illustrate them in the ledger as he spoke ("Little Red Riding Hood," 06b recto; Russian folktales, 06c recto, 07a recto, 14a verso, 58a). Charlot was fascinated by the descriptions and drawings of the trees heavily laden with snow and the Russian log cabins with their prominent folk art decorations. Sometimes two stages of a story would be illustrated separately, like cartoon panels (57b recto, 73c recto). Charlot would often trace or copy these drawings, reinforcing the connection between art and narrative.

Charlot then illustrated his own stories: in three very early drawings, people are rewarded for doing well in battle or work (40a recto–b recto); winged men and machines attack a fort;⁶⁵ a small submarine is hauled back aboard a ship.⁶⁶ A bear and its cub clawing at a tree seem to belong to a story (16c recto). A picture of lots of little men bustling with activity seems to have been done as Charlot was telling the story to himself or someone else (03a); the result resembles his later pictures of Maya builders. Charlot seems to have been fascinated by the military subjects that were so prominent in the large academic paintings he saw at the Louvre and other museums and salons. He loved to draw flags and banners, elaborate helmets and shakos, and uniformed and mounted horsemen. In an academically formal composition, a British and an American officer meet (54a verso). Soldiers and horsemen charge down a hill from right to left, anticipating the composition of Charlot's first fresco of 1922–1923, *The Massacre in the Main Temple*.⁶⁷ Two boats meet in battle, filling the sky with their puffs of cannon smoke (60a recto), an idea Charlot will use for *Naval Skirmish* in *Picture Book* (1933, Number 31).

Further evidence of exposure to artworks is found in the drawings of camels and dromedaries (03b verso), sometime with riders, a rhinoceros carrying a burden on its back (34b verso–34c recto; another rhinoceros on 34b recto), a man under a parasol in a cart (59a recto), Charlot’s version of an Egyptian statue (03c recto), and an excellent picture of a pirate (36b verso). Charlot studied his father’s art books. He remembered his first picture of a man, a copy of a swordsman by Hokusai, probably from Bing’s *Le Japon Artistique* (1888; Morse 1976: 6). Hokusai’s fascination for a child is easy to imagine; indeed, his people with their bunched bodies and thin, extending limbs resemble children’s images of human beings: a circular body with arms and legs sticking out. Bing’s whole book is filled with the subjects that interested Charlot: fish, birds, crabs, snails, insects, plants, horses and riders, boats, and so on. Although no direct copying is evident, I suspect the influence of the wonderful reproductions in the series *Documents Décoratifs Japonais Tirés de la Collection C. Gillot*: insects on flowers from No. 1, *Fleurs et Plantes*; cranes with long necks and legs and birds with exuberant tail feathers from No. 4, *Oiseaux*; and fish seen slightly from above forming diagonals along with convoluted eels from No. 8, *Poissons* (also Bing 1888: Sommaire du No 3, Planche AF. Carpes). Indeed as late as 1914, Charlot was being inspired by such works; he noted of his “Three Studies of a Dead Bird”: “Some Hokusai drawings of birds in *Bing* that had impressed me” (“JC Notes on his Early Artwork”). Such visual sources could have been mediated by Charlot’s father and governess. An abstract Germanic design of interlocking bands was drawn first by an older hand and then in several versions by Charlot, who varied it and tried to pull it apart to understand how it worked (450a recto–451c verso). Other subjects may have been taken from beyond the visual arts; a man in a tunic may depict one of Isadora Duncan’s dancers, a troupe Charlot watched as a child (79b recto).

Even when he is tracing, Charlot appears to be exploring both the subject and art itself. At times, he is clearly dealing with problems of art and representation. He distorts the head of a horse, raising it high in order to save it from being hidden by a flag (54a verso); a cat must rear back in the same way so as not to hide the aquarium he is looking at (89b recto). Wishing to portray fish in an aquarium, he finds that their forms disappear in the lines he uses for the water (02 verso). He then devises a solution: the lines depicting the water stop at the body of the fish, whose head is left in a strong white reserve (19c recto). He faces a similar problem with the face of an African soldier: the penciling in of the black skin obscures the features (99a).

A salient characteristic of Charlot’s earliest work is his preoccupation with composition. His development of a composition for fish can be followed through several attempts. The earliest are based on the observation of fish in an aquarium: he looks at the side of the tank, and the fish swim horizontally before him, one above the other (02 verso, 11b verso, 60c recto, 89a verso, 89b recto). Charlot then changes his point of view, looking down at the fish at a slant from above and achieving a more dynamic, full-page composition: two or more fish meet on separate diagonals (53a recto and verso). This is elaborated further when, working with his father, they start from a five-pointed star and use crisscrossing fish to make the same design (51c verso, 52a recto). Charlot varies this composition in his illustration of sleeping fish in *A Child’s Good Night Book* (1950). The young Charlot will then use these fish studies in a comprehensive fishing scene. The fisherman in the upper right hand corner holds a pole and line. The

long diagonal of the line unifies the page as it descends from the air deep into the water. A fish and a ray form horizontal lines, as in Charlot's earliest drawings; another fish is vertical as it swallows the bait of a second line; and an eel and a salamander follow the diagonal of the fishing line.⁶⁸ In such larger compositions, Charlot will also follow the classical practice of constructing large works from smaller studies, a lifelong practice. This can be seen in an early attempt at a large, double-page composition (04a verso–04b recto). Charlot has taken two single-page compositions—a tree planted in the center of each facing page—and joined them with the small central figure of a dog at ground level whose body spans the book's gutter. Long grass and flowers grow directly out of the ground, and in them and the trees are found birds and insects. The elements of the picture can be found singly in a number of Charlot's drawings and also in some by an older hand, probably intended as models (03b recto, 03c verso). Charlot will quickly move beyond such static, symmetrical compositions, for instance, arranging trees on receding ground levels, like a classical landscape (16b verso).

As on page 4 of the 1900 sheet, Charlot will study objects singly and then attempt to place them in their context. He even adds contexts to his father's drawings of single subjects (63b recto) and works with his father to draw around stickers of birds and other animals (81b recto–82b recto). In his own compositions, Charlot reinforces the diagonals of moving birds with those of the grass behind them (07a recto); snakes and eels can have their movements echoed (52c verso) or contrasted (06a verso, 07c recto). A crab is very well placed in darker tones on the sandy ground suggested by light, wavy, horizontal lines.⁶⁹ A comprehensive picture is given in schematic form: the underwater region with its fish is divided from the region above water by a horizontal line (54c recto). Charlot will use the same composition for a puppet theatre set in 1910 (*Sketchbook 1910*, number 30) and in his last monumental fresco, *The Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawai'i* (1974).

As mentioned above, Charlot displays in these, his earliest works, an innate sense of geometric composition: he “had the idea of plumb for standing and diagonals for motion” (“Notes from Jean Charlot on Early French Work”). He maintained this idea throughout his life, describing in 1973 one of his panels for his 1967–1973 *Episodes from the Life of Christ*:

Here, as in the scene of the Samaritan woman at the well, the setting is strict geometry. The Cenacle, its floor, walls and ceiling meeting at right angles, is a cube of space.

Within this rigid layout Peter, in his crusty childishness, explodes in diagonals of motion. (*Doors to Many Mansions* 2016: Panel 20)

Geometric composition was the sine qua non of great art, and the link between great art traditions, Classicism to Cubism to abstractionism to Mesoamerican and so on: “all artists think alike.”⁷⁰

Geometric composition is evident in these childhood works. A single insect is placed very well on the diagonal of a page (18c verso). A horse rears diagonally, and his tail flies up to echo the right edge of the page (54a recto). Charlot also uses geometry to explore form: an animal is reduced to geometric shapes (85a verso; compare 31b recto, 34a recto, 71b recto). A mother and child are carefully placed on opposing diagonals, which are connected by the top of the mother's skirt to form a triangle (83a verso);

the drawing appears to be a geometric analysis of some Renaissance Madonna and Child.⁷¹ Man-made objects lend themselves more easily to geometric composition: houses and boats are emphatically geometrical as are the flags that bedeck them (30a recto, 80b recto); he experiments with the problem of using a similar set of flags on a circular base (86b verso). Triangular tents can be fitted easily into such compositions (52a recto), as can sails (17b verso). But Charlot uses geometry even for subjects that do not lend themselves to it, like the fishing scene (31b verso) and the flying bubbles, discussed earlier (86a verso). Kite flying on a windy day produces a chaos of sights, but Charlot organizes the scene convincingly (78a recto). The body of the kite-flying boy forms a strong diagonal from his foot extended behind him to his arm and hand raised upward in front. From the hand stretches the kite string on the same diagonal. The grass bends in the same wind, and the horizontal lines painted on the kite have become diagonals in flight. Far in the background two other boys fly kites in a landscape of houses, animals, hills, and clouds, and all contribute to the general effect. The drawing is clearly that of a child. The main boy's body is a small oval with two legs but a single arm. But rather than being a mere stereotyped image, the childish body works for the composition: leg and arm are moved more closely into line than would be possible with a more realistic anatomy, and no second arm complicates the picture. The very ingenuousness of the style adds to the effectiveness of what is a genuine work of art.

In the ledger can be found a number of subjects that will become important for Charlot, like his first burden bearer (73c recto; compare Bing 1888: 13). A full-page study of a garden gate with a tree anticipates the many pictures he will be making through his youth of the family's houses (500a verso). Some subjects however belong only to this moment of his childhood, like the faces on the sun, moon, stars, and flowers that speak so touchingly of the personal way he looked at his world.⁷²

Four loose drawings dated 1904 are very close to the drawings in *Juvenilia 1904*, using the same subjects: animals and military scenes. Interestingly, the style seems to vary in maturity. Without the dates, one would guess that the childishly chaotic *Jour de la marche de l'armée organisée [sic] par le journal la "Nation"* had been done earlier than the neat *Two military musicians and a horserider*. They are however dated respectively May 9, 1904, and March 4, 1904. The explanation seems to be that the former was a spontaneous work, perhaps done on the scene, and the latter was an effort at making a careful, polished drawing. *Horses leaping over barriers on race course* is another careful work. The line is secure, and there are no erasures. The horses are at the same point of their jump over the barriers, creating an impression of symmetry. A diminution in scale of the horses is an attempt to show perspective. His drawing of the horses seen from the back reveals a problem he had not solved. The legs and the rear ends of the horses are correct, but the tails are placed on the side, as if the horses were seen in profile. The subject was in fact not done from life, but from works on the same subject or from descriptions; Charlot could not remember ever having gone to the races as a child ("CHARLOT on early French work").

*Sketchbook 1905 (1907)*⁷³ marks a clear advance in maturity over the drawings of 1904, and a number of intermediate works have certainly been lost. This sketchbook is the earliest evidence of a pattern of intensive artistic work done during summer vacations; when I suggested a cruder drawing might be earlier than the rest, Charlot noted, using an archeological term, "No. All done that same

‘Season.’” The Charlots were spending part of the summer of 1905 at Royat, a small vacation town with a twelfth-century fortified Romanesque church and with alkaline waters for drinking and medicinal bathing. There they lived the typical life of a watering place. From Charlot’s drawings, we can see that they stayed at a house or hotel with a railed terrace looking out over a garden in which a trimmed tree was standing. They visited the town and went to the baths and to the *source* to drink the waters, where they were attended by elderly local women still wearing their folk costumes. The family took walks in the surrounding countryside, looking back over the town and visiting a semaphore telegraph and an aqueduct. All these sights drew Charlot’s eye as subjects; except for a crane (19) and probably a monument (38)—both of which recall subjects in *Juvenilia*—all the drawings in the sketchbook seem to be from life.

A Greek-style vase is drawn in long single lines without hesitations or erasures; a line creates space by depicting the juncture of floor and wall, but the vase is seen head-on, with no attempt at perspective (26). Charlot’s drawing of the fortified church in blue pencil clearly pleased him. He gave it a title, *L’Église*, signed it with his artistic signature—the initial J inside the C of his last name—dated it “1905 25 Aout” [*sic*], and located it at “Roya” [*sic*] (6). He has taken pains to render the architecture exactly, especially the crenellation, but his perspective is erratic. The houses behind the church are done with a more suggestive sketchiness.

The majority of the drawings in the sketchbook are landscapes, and Charlot’s efforts to solve artistic problems are most evident in them. He is clearly experimenting with different pencil strokes and seeks the appropriate strokes for the object he is observing. In *royat* (11), he uses straight lines for the mountains and swirly ones for the vegetation; in 27 and 37, he uses straight lines for the house and fence and again swirly ones for plants. He clearly enjoys the calligraphic swirls inspired by vegetation (3).

Charlot’s most important problem, however, is legibility. Just as in *Juvenilia 1904*, he is finding that if he draws completely each object, the result is an illegible mess of lines covering the page. In *le parc* (7), he tries to differentiate the mass of foliage with different strokes for different plants and some darker strokes for trunks. He tries to unify the scene with vertical strokes—they cover most of the right side of the picture—but the result is still illegible (also 9, 25, 31). He is unsatisfied with color as a solution—he starts to use green on a tree, but stops (25; also traces of blue in 3). The use of white reserves is more effective. In *pavillon w. trellis* (37, Charlot’s 1970s title), the reserve makes the trellis more visible; he is in fact primarily interested in attempting to render its perspective. In *panorama* (13), the reserves on some of the plants clarify the luxuriant mass. That Charlot recognizes the problem can be seen in his returning to similar subjects to solve it. *les bains* (9) is confusing with its plants before a complicated building; *Source* (30) differentiates the architecture with single light lines and the trees with black vertical lines from the bushes done in calligraphic swirls. More important, Charlot uses composition to solve the problem: the big trunk on the left is thicker than the next one towards the right, giving a sense of progression in depth. Also the trees are in shadow, contrasting with the bright light on the building.

Charlot now organizes his landscapes. His preferred composition is horizontal and parallel to the surface of the page. In *paysage du parc* (3), The luxuriant foliage is organized between the railing of

the terrace and the back garden wall. Railing and wall are horizontal and parallel to the picture plane; a tree can be seen beyond the wall (compare 27). Charlot can use this frontal composition on large landscapes. In a mountain scene of Royat (4), a railing is used as in *paysage du parc*: the railing is in the center with plants on the sides. One looks over the railing to the town and its trees drawn in darker tones and with more complicated shapes. The surrounding mountains have been drawn with a single profiling line that suggests mass and atmosphere. In *royat* (11), the mountains are blacked in and the town—the buildings interestingly sketchy, especially the church—is in reserves; Charlot seems to have experimented by using the opposite means from 4. In *panorama* (14), an aqueduct or bridge in the foreground plays the same role as the rails in 3 and 4. In *panorama* (13), the scene is divided into sections with trees at the bottom center and again an interestingly sketchy town up and slightly to the right. Charlot seems conscious of the progress he is making. He had drawn the semaphore telegraph rather crudely (23), but went back to the subject to do a legible and comprehensive drawing that clearly pleased him (2). He gives it a title, *télégraphe Chappe*, signs it artistically, locates it, “Royat” [*sic*], and dates it, “1905 5 Septembre,” probably towards the end of their stay. The drawing includes all his points of interest in the scene and organizes them in a result that is clearly the drawing of a child, but a child who has been solving his artistic problems.

Smaller indications of progress can be found. Charlot first uses the *Juvenilia* formula of flying birds as forming a series of *Ms* (25); but in *sommet de la montagne* (5), he innovates on the formula by doing each bird in two detached lines. Other elements remain clearly childish; in (27), the house and plants are not placed on the ground—perhaps the ground was represented for Charlot by the bottom edge of the page. Throughout his childhood, Charlot’s work will reveal varying degrees of maturity and security. For instance, he will not fully and consistently master perspective until 1913.

As in *Juvenilia 1904*, Charlot worked with his father, who drew an ornate staircase with lamp (10), people around Royat (12, 14, 16), and a tree much like those he drew as models for his son in *Juvenilia* (18). Father and son continued their games with different forms of letters, seen already in *Juvenilia*; but here the stick figures and other forms representing letters have become a secret code (8; the rebus letter from Charlot to his father is dated 1909). Charlot has drawn from life a careful portrait of his father (21): Henri adjusts his pince-nez, thinking, pen in hand, his writing implements on the desk before him. The head is too large for the crudely drawn body, but the profile is individualized and expressive of inner thought.

Charlot has also drawn, as far as I know, his first self-portrait (29). On the small sheet, he started drawing a head and then crossed it out. He then started his own portrait at the bottom left corner of the page; it is not placed formally on the page, and Charlot later added two careless lines to separate that section into a rough square. Charlot is seated in a bathrobe, probably at a dressing table, with the sketchbook in front of him, and looking into the mirror. His hands and arm are exaggeratedly large; he is observing closely the distortion of natural vision produced by the mirror, and he will produce similar mirror effects in later works. One sees the back of the fancy chair he is sitting in, and some hatching provides the atmosphere, perhaps a curtain, behind him. Charlot looks directly at his reflection and emphasizes his large glasses. The expression is intense: he is looking and drawing. Finally, he pencils in

his cropped hair with heavy, tight zig-zaggy strokes; with equally dark strokes, he shows the shadow between the sleeve of his robe and the top of his right hand, now resting at the side of the sketchbook. He portrays himself as an artist. Charlot's 1943 description of a self-portrait by Eugene Payor fits this childhood work:

“The portrait of the painter reflected in a mirror with beveled edges asserts forcefully the concentration of the artist at work, at the same time that it states the optical problems that beset his eye.” (Charlot November 22, 1943).

Significantly, this same sketchbook contains also the first use of what I call Charlot's “artistic signature”: the initial *J* inserted into the large capital *C* of his last name (6). Odette has signed her name the same way—the *O* inside the *C*—in a playful copyrighting of some invention of her brother's (22). They both might be imitating their mother whose own artistic signature put together the right diagonal of her first initial with the left curve of the *G* in Goupil.

Charlot has also been attracted to the bustle of the watering place. In contrast to Henri's drawings, which concentrated on individual figures, Charlot likes the excitement of the crowd. In *tête [sic]* (17), six clever, funny heads manage to create a scene; they have all the verve of Charlot's earlier funny faces, but add his new observation of real people. Similarly, a page of mostly separate figures (19) creates the impression of a crowd: a woman in her enveloping bathing costume, another with an umbrella, two very well-drawn boys in sailor suits, and so on. One senses Charlot's childlike excitement and his unusually mature humor. Like his father, Charlot can do individuals; he depicts a *woman w. hat*, an unusually complicated one that recalls his interest in headgear in *Juvenilia* (also 28, 34, 36).

Charlot was naturally drawn to the special activities of the watering place. He draws the outside of the baths and the drinking hall (9, 30). Inside he draws the baths and people making ripples—the perspective of the pool is studied—and the bath attendants in their folk costumes (32, 35).

Charlot's interest in folk culture is visible in this sketchbook. He had already become familiar with French folk cultures through his family's servants; his first painting completely in color shows the cook going to market in her peasant hat. Moreover, Charlot's mother had earlier depicted folk subjects: a woman in her peasant head covering and another gathering shellfish while wearing wooden shoes (JCC). *Juvenilia 1904* (59a recto) contains a picture in an older hand of a woman with a peasant hat. Charlot emphasizes the folk hats of the women bath attendants (33, 35); the bath attendant in the ladies' section (35) is outfitted in an elaborate folk costume and is reading the newspaper through very prominent spectacles—Charlot has observed her with exactitude and humor. Charlot's drawing of a woman making lace (1) is carefully detailed. The woman wears an elaborate head covering as well as lace at her neck. She is engaged happily in an artistic activity, with her tools beside her in a sort of pincushion and a dark cloth over her lap and knees, probably to help her see the intricacies of the lace. She sits in an easy chair with a brocade covering the back. Charlot has managed to include much detail and express his affection and admiration. The drawing is in fact Charlot's first homage to a folk artist. Others will follow in Mexico.

A final drawing survives from 1905 on a sheet Charlot used that year and the next while the family was vacationing on the seacoast.⁷⁴ On the verso is a drawing in color pencil by Henri Charlot of the hotel where the family stayed. On the recto, Charlot drew an example of the unusual houses found in the area, which he identified in the early 1970s as “disused fishing boats arranged with thatched roofs and used as cabins. Monet painted some of them.”⁷⁵ Charlot signed the sketch with his artistic signature and dated it 1905. The sketch is on the same scale as those in the above sketchbook and fits badly on the large sheet of paper. He also made a small but well detailed drawing of a motorcar, perhaps the one they had driven to the site; this also is on the scale of the sketchbook. Charlot then picked up the sheet in 1906 and started a second drawing of the same subject on the same scale as his previous one. He appears to have left this unfinished and instead drew a much larger version of the cabin, which he signed in the same way and dated 1906. He seems to have done this deliberately to contrast his work in successive years and to demonstrate the progress he had made. The 1906 drawing is more elaborate and more accurately observed. A number of different strokes are used to render the different textures of the thatched roof as opposed to the simple vertical strokes used in 1905. Moreover Charlot has now used the size of the sheet to advantage, placing his new drawing as well as he could among the earlier ones. This drawing is the only survivor of many that Charlot must have done in that year.

The *Sketchbook 1905 (1907)* (24) contains one drawing that Charlot signed artistically and dated May 10, 1907: an architectural rendering of two town houses similar to a large drawing of a country house that his mother had made in 1886. Charlot renders the details of the architecture in clear lines with his characteristically interesting sketchy suggestion of sculpture in the pediments. He has made clear progress in his perspective from his 1905 drawing *L'Église* (6). Some childish elements remain. Charlot seems more interested in the details of the houses than the houses as wholes. Moreover, as in *Sketchbook 1905 (1907)* (27), he has not provided a bottom or base for the houses, concentrating on the upper sections—the top floors and roofs. As a result, they seem to be placed oddly on the page.

The most important surviving work from the next year is *Cutouts 1907*: white or occasionally colored papers pasted onto heavy blue sheets and bound in Hawai'i.⁷⁶ (An unmounted cutout was found in one of Charlot's childhood books, *L'Ami de L'Enfance*, probably being used as a bookmark.) The figures are very graphic and lively, and their tiny details show remarkable finger control. The figures are usually silhouettes, but they are sometimes created by cutting into a sheet and letting the blue paper show through; the same method is used also for single lines and areas. The figures have in most cases been placed on the page with the clear intention of creating an overall design, usually symmetrical but with occasional asymmetries that suggest Oriental influence (1). A full-page layout of three odd fish and an eel uses the horizontal composition found in *Juvenilia 1904*, but the fish swim well together, moving slightly upward (6).

The subjects recall many of Charlot's interests from *Juvenilia 1904*: animals and fish real and fantastic, plants, ships, flying men and machines, weapons, and exotic costumes and architecture, especially Chinoiserie and other Orientalisms (an interest Charlot will maintain throughout his youth). Two beings with human legs and monstrous bodies recall Charlot's gods composed of animal and human bodies; a strange monkey idol on a sort of ritual totem pole seems to emerge from the same sensibility (5,

12). A man in peasant costume represents Charlot's interest in folk art. A new interest can be seen in Greek vases (13, 14), comparable to the one he drew in *Sketchbook 1905 (1907)* (26); Charlot's study of classical art is known to have been intense at this time, but very little evidence can be found of it in the surviving artworks. The cutouts of repeating patterns (2) anticipate the friezes he did for his room later; the nonrepeating friezes (9, 10, 14) anticipate the *Grand Théâtre d'Ombre Chinoise 1910 1911*. More curiously, the outline of a steamship (10) resembles Charlot's illustrations for *Urbe* (1924) by Manuel Maples Arce, and some of the outlines of human beings resemble Hawaiian petroglyphs!

The cutouts are important also as the first artistic evidence of Charlot's study of Mexican art:

I've done cut-paper work since I was nine years old. It's an old Mexican folk art form. My grandfather had some fine examples. For me, it was a similar technique to that of the silk-screens, cutting in reserve. (Morse numbers 560–562)

Charlot characteristically the folk genre was identical to high art in its technical challenges: "For me, it was a similar technique to that of the silk-screens, cutting in reserve" (Morse numbers 560–562). Mexican folk cutouts remained in the family collection; I saw some in Odette's Paris apartment in the large cabinet in which she displayed the family collection of Mexican folk art. Especially clear examples of inspiration from that source are the cutouts of trees whose branches form the names "JEAN CHARLOT" (1, 5) and "ANITA" (3); another tree bears "LOVE" (5). A separate *Anita* was framed and kept by Odette.⁷⁷ An alphabet has been cut out with flower appendages as in *Juvenilia 1904* (4). A complex heart directly recalls Mexican art as well as the subject of a man lassoing a cow (3). Later in his life, Charlot made cutouts of very elaborate scenes and identified Mexican folk art as his inspiration; Zohmah Charlot wrote to her friend Prudence Plowe from Mexico:

Jean cut colored tissue papers into beautiful scenes which we hung on the walls. He says when he was little his grandfather had brought from Mexico beautiful cut-out tissue papers, so he had always made them, though he had never seen the same ones in Mexico. (undated, 1945, p. 7)

Charlot appreciated cutouts as art and as a traditional genre that originated in Mexican Indian cultures, had an important place in folk culture, and were used by contemporary artists ("Los Papeles 'Picados' de Lola Cueto" 1946). Of course, cutouts, or *découpages*, were known in France as well, and Charlot was familiar with the widespread practice of making silhouettes; profiles in silhouette made of family members in France are kept in the JCC. Charlot would use his cutout skills in his serigraphs and typography.

No artworks survive from 1908, but 1909 begins early with two small caricatures in black pencil of a teacher at his school: *BAMBOULA chez HATTEMER* and *BAMBOULA*, the former signed with Charlot's artistic signature and dated January 27, 1909.⁷⁸ The thin, wildly stern teacher carries a whip in one hand and a "CARN. DE. NOTE" 'grade book' in the other. The image has been created by making an outline first and then filling it with vertical pencil strokes. The two drawings are anachronistically childish in style, but with a child's verve and energy. These were not Charlot's first caricatures; he

remembered that when still a small child, “I could already infuriate my English governess by making portraits of her” (“An Artist Looks Back” March 8, 1972).

The oscillation between a childish and a polished style was noted already for two drawings from 1904: Charlot reverted to a more childish style when just having fun and pushed his style as far as he could toward careful maturity in his “presentation drawings.” The formal pole is represented in 1909 by *Schoolboys in Street*, dated October 19, which Charlot described in the early 1970s as “homework for drawing class at Condorcet. Type of thing one did for teacher.”⁷⁹ Charlot had moved into a higher school where the art teacher obviously expected less exuberance and more correctness. The images are carefully drawn, colored, and arranged on the page, even though the perspective is still shakey (the lamp seems to mark the Golden Section). The sedate, neatly dressed boys march in close order, two by two, like model French scholars down a clean street.⁸⁰ When in the early 1970s Charlot looked again at his childhood work, he disparaged only two items: the above and *Man with Bleeding Pig*, probably done during his last year in school, 1913–1914.⁸¹ Indeed, he seemed to disown the two drawings and for the same reason; of the latter he commented: “man with bleeding animal = homework for school. = theme given.” Speaking of his courses at Condorcet, Charlot stated in the interview of November 6, 1970:

I wasn’t very good in drawing. I still have some drawings here that have been corrected by my teacher to correspond to some C’s and at times to some B’s. They were not really very good, now that I look at them.

The two works are the surviving examples of a moment he described in his article on children’s art, “Prológo como Presentación de un Grupo de Grabadores en Madera,” which I quote from the French original, “Prologue ou Présentation d’un Groupe de Graveurs sur Bois”:

quand l’enfant grandit, il y a une brusque rupture entre la production enfantine et les premières productions “sérieuses,” supposées un progrès. Il est de règle que l’enfant qui veut faire l’homme perd toute la spontanéité et sensibilité de son âge et ne débute dans “l’art” que par les formes les plus académiques, quitte à se rapprocher de ses premiers pas plus tard.

‘when the child grows, there is a brusque rupture between the childish production and the first “serious” productions, supposed to be a progress. It is a rule that the child who wants to be adult loses all the spontaneity and sensibility of his age and only makes his debut in “art” through the most academic forms, unless he later goes back to his first steps.’

In his two school works, for all their academic achievement, Charlot missed the crucial element of spontaneity. The force of his statements—seemingly out of proportion to the pleasant drawings at issue—reflects, I believe, the defensiveness of an artist who senses encroachments on his preserve of free creativity. A struggle may lie behind his “2^e Prix de Dessin” ‘Second Prize for Drawing’ for the school year 1913–1914 at Condorcet. Charlot’s response to his teacher’s pressure anticipates his resistance to any clerical attempts to dominate his liturgical art.

Charlot's personal serious work of 1909 survives in a remarkable series of anatomical studies of his left hand and his feet.⁸² Charlot had traced his own hand in *Juvenilia* 1904 and then tried more awkwardly to draw it freehand (435b verso). On the recto of *Drawings of Hands and Feet*, Charlot looks directly down at his left foot and its unusual overlap of his big toe over its neighbor. He draws it in profile and twists it over to see it from the side, making a strong line where the interior bones of his toes are folding. He has drawn his lines lightly and then gone over them again to darken them; but they have not been changed and are secure. On the verso, he makes five drawings of his left hand in various positions: holding a brush (?), pointing, pressing with his thumb down on his index finger, sticking his thumb out, and showing the back of his fist with his knuckles. He has used a little shading to suggest form, but the outlines suffice to do so. In the recto of *Four Sketches of Left Hand*, a vertical and a horizontal hand are drawn more awkwardly. On the verso, the drawing is better, and lines across the knuckles are used to analyze the form of the hand. *Legs and Foot* seems more advanced with its use of hatching to express form. He has put his foot with the odd toe up to a mirror from which he makes the drawing; in the same way, he draws his nude legs. Charlot is observing very intently and achieves a very respectable anatomical study as practiced in the academies of the time. Charlot is expanding his range with characteristic assiduity.

The year 1910 was productive in several fields. Charlot's *Sketchbook 1910*⁸³ contains sections on puppet theatre sets and model airplanes, discussed elsewhere. I will concentrate here on the fourteen drawings he made from observation while staying at his grandfather's summer house, the Villa St. Louis in Poissy, along with his Mexican uncle Luis Labadie and his cousin Jules or Julio, who was born on September 16, 1903, and so was some five years younger than Jean. Jules tried to imitate the drawings of his older cousin; since his drawings are in the sketchbook, Charlot was probably instructing him, following the example of Henri.⁸⁴

Many of the subjects of the drawings can be compared with earlier works. Charlot's portrait of Luis reading a newspaper (10) has the same childish fault seen in his 1905 portrait of Henri: the head is a little too large for the body. But the work as a whole is lively and interesting and stands on its own. The face is expressive, and much character can be read in the body and gesture. Charlot continues his interest in street scenes and architecture and has made progress in architectural rendering and perspective, which is, however, not yet entirely mastered (2 [Charlot noted: "seen from Villa St Louis"], 3). *wood pile. Boat upside down covered w. tarpaulin* (13) recalls Charlot's frontal compositions of *Sketchbook 1905 (1907)* with its horizontal wall backing the woodpile and the boat and with the more lightly toned trees beyond it. But the wall and the objects in front of it are at an angle to the picture plane; Charlot was devising a more difficult composition. As in earlier sets of drawing, some unevenness is seen in quality (14, 15).

The most significant advance of *Sketchbook 1910* is in Charlot's use of strokes, tones, white reserves, and composition to create legible landscapes. Indeed, Charlot's strokes are being developed into a system of description. Charlot uses the sharp point and soft side of the pencil (11) and employs horizontal, vertical, and diagonal strokes very consciously (16). Diagonal strokes unify objects (12). Charlot displays his unusual talent for suggesting form through the use of steady, straight pencil strokes (1, 3, 7, 11). A heavy pencil outline is used for a trunk while the leafy section is described exclusively in

horizontal strokes (3). In *Poissy* (7), reserves are used well for the pair of sinuous, heavily outlined trees in the foreground, and the foliage is described legibly in different tones and in reserves; the horizontal strokes are normative, and nonhorizontal ones are used for different foliage. Light shading is used well in leafy sections of trees (2).

Most important, despite the fact that the drawings are in black pencil, they display a new coloristic sense. The light tones of 12 suggest light and atmosphere. *Seine with pêcheur à la ligne boat* (5) is an evening scene, all dark tones in earth and sky with a phosphorescent light on the water. Predominant horizontal strokes unify different areas while verticals add variety. *Villa St Louis, facing Seine* (4) uses the thin and sharp point and the fuzzier side of the pencil for effect, differentiating the darker leaves of the tree with short horizontal fuzzy strokes. Charlot will later paint the same scene in watercolor—with its railing, chairs, bench and plants—revealing how coloristically he saw it. In fact, he noted for this drawing: “same as seen by Monet ca 1883.” I will discuss later Charlot’s acquaintance with Impressionism; he himself felt that his more Impressionistic works were a result of his personal observation.

But on the surviving evidence, Charlot was not ready in 1910 to express his coloristic sense in color. This can be seen by comparing his black and white drawing of the kitchen door at Poissy in *Sketchbook 1910* (9) with his color drawing of the same subject. The sketchbook drawing is a very careful composition that he will simply enlarge for the color version. Like Chardin, he uses the geometric shapes of the man-made objects—rectangular windows and doors, barrels, broom handles, brush—as the framework of his composition; he then contrasts them with the textures and irregular forms of the bushes and vines. The perspective has improved but is still unsure in the opened top section of the door and in the broom handles. The picture is Charlot’s first of a kitchen subject, which will become a major theme in Mexico. *Kitchen Door of House at Poissy*⁸⁵ is a careful blow-up of the sketchbook drawing with the significant addition of color. That color is however exclusively local and, unlike the best black and white drawings in the sketchbook, provides no sense of overall atmosphere. Charlot’s color work was lagging behind the color sense revealed in the sketchbook.

In 1911, in two series of watercolors, Charlot concentrated on realizing the color sense he had already displayed in black and white: *Five Watercolors Done on the Seine at Poissy* and *Twelve Watercolors of Rooftops and Skyscapes*.⁸⁶ None of these are dated but Charlot tentatively placed them both “ca 1911?”. In an interview of October 31, 1970, Charlot wobbled on the date of the two series, “they are probably around the same time when I was fourteen or fifteen”; “I must have been fourteen years old or thirteen years old at the time.” He was thirteen years old in 1911, and that seems indeed to be the best date. The works are not on the level of maturity of the watercolors of 1912, and they are closely connected to the *Sketchbook 1910*; some indeed may have been done at the same spots. They are also not on the level of dissimilar works he will do, I believe, later in 1911, discussed below. Charlot clearly places both series in the same year; this is supported by the fact that they were done on watercolor paper of the same size and quality, perhaps from the same pad or album. He also uses many of the same devices, such as reserves, a range of wetness in his washes, and parallel strokes, similar to his pencil strokes in *Sketchbook 1910*. On the evidence of the interview, *Five Watercolors* was done before the

series of *Twelve Watercolors*; they are Charlot's first concentrated essays in color. A further indication is that two watercolors in the latter series are very close to Charlot's watercolors of 1912. Apparently, Charlot wanted to continue his color work after the summer, even though he had to do cityscapes with their drabber colors and often polluted light.

Charlot discussed the first series in an interview of October 31, 1970, when I asked him about staying at the same house as Monet:

I recognized certainly in quite a number of his pictures the same places from the same point of view where I did my first watercolors. At the time I didn't have much idea of Monet. I had an idea of the Impressionists through a very beautiful picture by Boudin, which is Pre-Impressionist, older than Monet, and one of my uncles had that picture of a beach and people on the beach. It was a large picture, and as a little child I was astonished that anybody would be called "Boudin" of course, which is "sausage," and I thought it was very little artistic as a name. But looking at the picture, which was full of sunlight, one of the most beautiful Boudin's I have seen, I got of course an idea, though I didn't have the label for it, of the painting of *plein air*, of sunlight, and Impressionism. But in Poissy, probably by looking at the same scenes, I started doing landscapes. That is long ago. I may have been fourteen years old, I think, when I did a little album of landscapes that were all related to reflections in the water. And by looking and trying to copy nature, I realized that those reflections were made of dissimilar colors. Some would reflect the sky, some would reflect the trees, and so on. And I tried in those little watercolors to do things as I had seen them on the Seine, by our Villa St. Louis, which was the name of my grandfather's summer house. And they are certainly the closest things to Impressionism I have ever done, simply by looking at the same scenes that Monet had seen and of course painted in a masterly way in the 1880s. There was a quality, I would say, to the place and to the *plein air* which was so different from Paris and certainly resulted in my appreciating nature and natural forms...somewhere I have for example studies of poppies in liberty, if we could say, in freedom, just as they were growing out of the ground. I remember that I was so excited with those things that my mother was worried because I painted in the full sunlight, and she was trying to make me go inside because I would get sunstroke, and of course I stayed until I had finished my work.

I am rather pleased that I kept those early watercolors—they are connected with nature—because, of course, much later on, faced with a perhaps more tropical nature—in Fiji, for example, the rain forests, the *hala* trees, in Hawai'i also, of course, palm trees and date palms and halas also, banyans—I could start again looking at nature from where I had left when I was in my teens still and, of course, with a certain added experience and knowledge.

The main Impressionist influence on Charlot at this time was thus Eugène Boudin:

I had a wonderful contact with a masterpiece by Boudin, who is one of the great Impressionists, and I think that was sufficient to suggest to me something that my visits to the Louvre wouldn't have given me, that idea of *plein air* and sunshine.

But Charlot affirms that his main inspiration for the new watercolors was a new level of observation. A photograph of the time shows him lying on a boat beside his seated uncle Aristide Martel, looking intently at the water. That new observation had begun at least by 1910; what was new in 1911 was that he began to express it in color.

Although the Seine Series looks childish on first view, closer inspection reveals that Charlot is attempting certain effects and often succeeds in creating them. All the paintings have been done from life, and the principal means employed are color washes, for which different densities of color and different brush strokes—sometimes tip of the brush, sometimes dry, sometimes washy or splotchy—have been consciously employed. I suspect a certain influence from his study of Oriental brush painting, in which all of the above techniques can be studied and which he mentioned at various times in writing and in conversation. The preliminary drawing is minimal and does not fully describe the forms; that is left to the freehand washes. Gray pencil has been used in 1 and in 4. In 2, 3, 4, 5, a light, black crumbly line can be seen. I believe this is crayon—used perhaps because it would not smear in contact with water—touched very lightly onto the page. At the same time, Charlot uses white reserves and composition to clarify the landscape.

Number 1 (the numbering is not in chronological order) is in vertical format of a moored boat with trees on the right. Charlot is closely observing the subject and concentrating on rendering the impression of the light. The color of the water changes from light gray at the top, reflecting the semi-cloudy sky, to dark blue-gray at the center with greener passages near the trees on the bank, to light blue at the bottom with a dark green shadow. White reserves provide brilliance and spacing between some of the colors. A light wash describes the overall form of the trees, while darker strokes describe their interior movement; dry brush strokes create an effective scratchy effect for the trunks. The reflections of the trees in the water are made evident by their peculiar form. A simplified area in dark green suggests reeds in the middle distance. In front of the trees, dark vertical strokes describing plants contrast with the light wash of the bank. No color is purely local; all the colors participate in the general light of the scene. The composition could be compared to Charlot's puppet sets of 1910—the water forming the stage, and the intruding elements, flats. But the airy atmosphere negates any impression of staginess.

Number 2, also in vertical format, depicts a striped pole and moorings along a heavily wooded river bank. The composition provides an effective recession in depth from left to right—from the pole planted below the picture line and thus in the extreme foreground, to the moorings, to three clumps of trees that recede through diminishing size. The first tree clump is particularly well done: splotches of blue-gray and white reserves vary the mass of the foliage, and the soft but directed strokes give the whole a pushing, striving, growing character that is strongly organic. The two distant clumps are more generalized: an outline in light wash with darker strokes done in the same direction as the first. Similarly, the strokes forming the reeds in the middle ground melt into each other, but their vertical direction is still

felt and expresses their subject. The water makes a very liquid impression with white reserves and extreme color variations for the different types of shadow. Again, the sense of an overall light and a humid atmosphere is successfully expressed.

Number 4, *garden Villa St Louis*, is a subject he had already drawn in his *Sketchbook 1910: Villa St Louis, facing Seine* (4), which he noted was the “same as seen by Monet ca 1883.” (He would make a larger watercolor of the same site in 1911 or 1912.) Here he has taken full advantage of working in color. Five different colors of leaves are used in the front section and a sixth in the back, all depending on the plant and especially on the overall light. White reserves and brushstrokes are fully employed, but the perspective is still handled awkwardly.

Numbers 3 and 5 are less successful. In the former, he experiments with integrating a very dark color, the opening of the boat house (?) reflected in the water, balanced in turn by a dark section on the opposite side of the sheet. The sense of floating reflections is the most successful aspect of a painting that fails to clearly define its subject. Number 5, *sunset over water*, is an earnest attempt with good passages, like the dark splotchy tree on the left. But the strokes do not define their forms well, and the over-all spacing is loose—the large stretch of water in the middle fails to hold the picture together. Charlot was clearly struggling with his new interest.

Charlot connected *Twelve Watercolors of Rooftops and Skyscapes* closely to the above series:

Well, that was a series of skies which I did in Paris, and they are probably around the same time when I was fourteen or fifteen. Those Paris apartments—we lived on a fifth floor in the Chaussée d’Antin—had very little, of course, of nature in them, but over the roofs and over the chimneys and the chimney pots, there was the sky. And I remember that I had—I must have been fourteen years old or thirteen years old at the time—I had the idea of doing a series of skies from the same point of view, that is, with the skyline of the roofs always the same and just following the different moments of the day and weather effects, and so on. I remember one day I wanted to do a sunrise, and so I went very early. I had to do it from the window of my parents’ bedroom. I went very early, and when they awoke, they found that I was doing that watercolor of the sunrise, and of course they were rather astonished at the sight.

(Interview October 31, 1970)

Curiously, we have Henri Charlot’s description of waking up with the light coming through the inside shutters:

Henri Charlot
[Très studieuse]

Ding une deux trois quatre cinq six sept
C’est l’heure de quitter son bed
Toc toc toc. Entres Marguerite

Déjà la nuit la chambre quitte
Car grands s'ouvrent les volets
Et la lumière [entre] d'une envolée
Dore tout [les objets] ce qui [nous entoure] était noir
Et qu'a peine nous pouvions voir
[Et de fait qui tout éveil
À moi me redonne le sommeil]
Et c'est de toute la nature l'éveil
Qui à moi me redonne [à moi] sommeil

'Henri Charlot
[Very studios]

Ding one two three four five six seven
It's time to leave his bed
Toc toc toc. Marguerite enters
Already the night leaves the room
For the shutters open wide
And the light [enters] with one flight
Gilds all [the objects] that [enveloped us] was black
And we could hardly see
[and in fact what wakes everything
makes me go to sleep again]
And it's the awakening of all of nature
that makes me go to sleep again'

Charlot noted in the 1970s that the series was painted "from balcony Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin." From that balcony, the sunrise can be seen over the rooftops of Paris. The sun then passes over the Charlot's apartment building, so that the sunset itself cannot be seen, only the rosy glow it leaves in the sky. Charlot painted different moments of the sunrise, progressively 10, 11, and 8 (not necessarily in chronological order). The scene during the day was painted at different stages of the sun's progress and under different weather conditions (1, 2, 5, 6, 7); 2 and 7 have the same light and weather condition and may have been done on the same day. The sky opposite the sunset is then depicted (3, 4, 9, 12). The direction Charlot is looking remains the same, but contrary to his memory, he selects different portions of the roofscape for each picture.

Charlot first penciled in very lightly the outline of the rooftops and some interior details, leaving the sky area without markings. He then waited for the sun or the light to reach the desired point and painted the scene in wash. As a result, the wash most often makes changes from the drawing, for instance, darkening the mass of buildings so that the interior pencil outlines are lost and also not filling outlines that were made vague by the light. That is, the pencil indicates what Charlot was prepared to

see; and the wash, what he in fact did. On one occasion, he experienced a significant surprise, as described below.

Like the series done in Poissy, *Twelve Watercolors of Rooftops and Skyscapes* appears childish at first, but more interesting on study. Charlot is clearly setting himself problems and solving them with great care. His main problem is to observe closely and render exactly, using layers of colors when necessary. This effort is obvious in the skies, where he paints unflinchingly in grays, greens, white, and rose, and seems to avoid the conventional blue. Different colors are interlarded, pooled, or surprisingly varied in intensity according to the accidents of the sky and light. The colors of his buildings vary along an equal spectrum. The red of his roofs darkens and lightens with the weather; chimneys turn blue, brown, green, or gray; one picks up an isolated and anomalous red glow; and the depth and colors of darkness are studied against the light. Horizontal strokes describe wind direction (12). Charlot's struggle to achieve his effects can be appreciated by looking at his less successful 9, where local colors work against an overall sense of light. Despite his interest in light in general, Charlot seems to perk up on a clear, sunny day; 2 and 7, perhaps done on the same radiant day, are by far the happiest and the most successful of the series and anticipate closely his larger watercolors of 1912.

Charlot's second problem was to join the sky to the buildings in a unified composition despite the fact that the buildings tend to appear stronger and heavier. To balance the two areas, Charlot uses several devices besides placement and corresponding colors; for instance, he makes the sky more vivid and darkens the mass of the buildings so that it recedes. A heavy dark cloud assumes a roughly square shape, divided into rectangles of different tones, that binds it to the buildings and the page (5). Spatial recession is suggested effectively by diminution in size, but the perspective can still appear uncertain at times.

Charlot was most innovative in his sunrise scenes, and they reportedly surprised and challenged him the most. In 11, he uncharacteristically uses white paint to depict the strongest point of light, and the reserves are used to describe one of its results. The intense white source turns a light yellow and then, past a dark cloud, becomes gradations of blue from lighter to darker. The source lightens the shadows down the middle of the group of buildings, leaving the sides very dark.

Charlot's biggest experience was recorded in 8, which is the high point of the series. When in the early 1970s, Charlot saw this painting for the first time after many years, he burst out laughing. His memory of making it accords exactly with the painting itself. Charlot had first drawn in pencil the outline of the central chimney and the rooftops; this was his standard practice. He was then astonished when the rising sun dissolved the side of the chimney he had drawn; he could no longer see the right side of the chimney that he had penciled in. The drawing makes clear that he was not expecting that effect, and the line remains, caught in a circle of light. He rendered his experience with a half circle of white paint up to the side of the chimney and another half circle of almost imperceptible wash within it. White paint, reserves, and light washes splash onto the rooftops and chimneys, their pencil outlines still visible, but their forms being dissolved by the light. A bright yellow crescent is attached to the top right edge of the half circle of intense white paint, like a flash in the retina. Radiating strokes of light yellow-green wash

spread outward and upward through the sky from the source of the light, with darkening blues at the outer edge of the resulting irregular circle of light. Even the darker buildings of the foreground are penetrated by the light, forming a rougher circle with very dark edges.

This painting marks the extreme point to that time of Charlot's perception of the possible conflict of drawing versus painting, of understood versus perceived form, of the object as known by the mind versus the object as seen by the eye. This conflict can be seen in the other paintings of this series. Charlot will continue and even extend his "Impressionist" work, but he will in a few years make the major decision to base his work on geometric composition with a supporting use of color. Only in the Pacific will he focus again on an exploration of landscape and light, "of course, with a certain added experience and knowledge." Nonetheless, Charlot's early "Impressionist" works are important in his development. He stated in an interview:

the fact that this has not become my main interest, nevertheless it was an important thing to know that it could be done.

So I had a knowledge of Impressionism, and I had a knowledge of what the Impressionists saw in nature, especially through that looking at the skies and the reflections in the water, but I don't think that none [*sic*] of that became one of [the] essentials, anyhow, of my art-making. (October 31, 1970)

The year 1911 was productive—including activity in several areas like book illumination and puppet theatre—and a number of other works have survived. The drawing in pencil and wash *Odette Travaillant* has been supplied with information in an older hand: "Odette Charlot/ Février 1911/ préparation au baccalauréat."⁸⁷ Passing the *baccalauréat* is a family drama in France—the examinations are taken in June, and the results are received at the end of that month or in early July—and Charlot did several drawings that year of Odette working and resting. When she passed the examination on October 7, 1911, usually the occasion of a family feast, he illuminated Hégésippe Moreau's *Contes à ma Sœur* as a present for her.⁸⁸ *Odette Travaillant* is one of the least energetic of Charlot's childhood works and can be compared to the "academic" *Schoolboys in Street* of 1909. Odette sits in front of a blackboard in a smock to protect her dress. The blackboard and Odette's chair (in profile) are parallel to the picture plane and help divide the page into flat, geometric spaces, while Odette supplies the organic curves. The drawing is left unfinished, with another chair, a wall lamp, and curtains sketched lightly on the sides. Charlot began a much more interesting composition of Odette at the same blackboard but seen from the side; unfortunately, he left it unfinished.⁸⁹

On stylistic grounds, I would place the undated drawing *Henri Charlot Playing Solitaire Chess* in early 1911.⁹⁰ The proportions are more correct than in *Sketchbook 1910*, but not as mature as the work done later in 1911. Charlot has worked at getting the lines right, especially on the legs of the wooden chair and the back of the easy chair; he also reveals an interest in the textures of the robe and chair cloth—interests developed in his book illustrations for Odette. Nevertheless, the drawing as a whole is energetic rather than academic, with its bold strong strokes and effectively sketchy chess pieces. Henri is

deeply absorbed in his morning game; Charlot remembered his father as “a great chess player” (Interview September 15, 1970).

Along with his *Five Watercolors Done on the Seine at Poissy*, Charlot’s major initiative in the summer of 1911 was his first oil painting, *Mathilde*.⁹¹ Some years before I had seen this painting, my father told me about his memory of doing it. He asked the cook to sit for him and was painting her in the kitchen. He did her head and then moved to her body. When he painted the curve of her breast, he was suddenly disturbed by a sexual feeling and stopped, leaving the painting unfinished. Charlot spoke of this in the interview of September 14, 1970:

And we had a cook who, I think, was rather rounded and had heavy breasts, and I remember my feeling of success when I rounded her on the paper and gave that heaviness to—of course she was fully clothed, but I would say to her corset, because people at the time, women wore corsets, but it looked to me a very sensuous thing, again though I didn’t have the word to describe it. However that sensuousness is not terribly apparent, I think, in what I did later on, but it was perhaps a way of pinning a sort of idea of a passion to painting which of course painters have when they paint, though it was a childish affair.

Again, the work corroborates Charlot’s memory. The heavy canvas, with tack marks in the corners, has been primed evenly with cream paint, perhaps prepared for him by his mother, who was working in oils. Charlot is working tentatively on this clearly important project and is learning as he works. He starts with a thick black line for the profile of the head, with its white folk bonnet, and a thin outline for the body. Then when he wants to fill in the outline with color, he thinks he can use the color also to hide the black line. He covers most of the bonnet line with white but leaves a trace of it and seems to muddy his whites. He is obviously unfamiliar with glazing, that is, the way lower layers of oil paint show through the layers placed on top of them. Charlot tries to cover the line at the bottom of the chin, but finds that the line comes through the glaze. He simply leaves most of the line on the forehead and nose. Similarly, he leaves the black outline on the train of the bonnet. Inside the black outline, he is painting freehand; the blouse has white spots done in pure color. He is characteristically interested in the possibility of painting thickly with the oil, so different from the watercolors he knows. All his life, he will explore the distinctive qualities of different media. Here he sculpts the details of the cook’s folk bonnet and different parts of her face. The slightly turned profile is strong and severe as she concentrates on the work in her lap. Charlot has already shown his interest in depicting people at their work. He then turns to the bust and finds his earlier outline too thin and flat. He draws a much fuller black outline and then abandons the painting.

In the interview of September 14, 1970, Charlot mentioned copies and possibly original works in oil done for his teachers: “I usually worked in oil on a sort of, well, not canvas board but what we had at the time, sort of a paper that took the oil.” Two undated oils may be the only surviving examples of these works.⁹² *Still life with Sèvres-type Vase* is expertly painted with a jewel-like finish. *Still life with Crystal Bottle* is equally finished with expert sculpting of the forms in paint. Nonetheless, the two works make a

more distanced, academic impression than Charlot's more personal works; and they may in fact be copies of artworks (Interview September 14, 1970). The certainly earlier *Purple Orchids* has a more immediate connection to the model and the impression is much fresher.⁹³ The stock and leaves have been outlined in pencil and then painted in; the painting of the blossoms themselves is very lush. Again, Charlot takes advantage of the medium: besides sculpting in paint, he mixes the oil colors, which cannot be done in watercolor, and has now learned to exploit glazing to create an effect. The next surviving oil paintings by Charlot were done on his trip to Brittany in 1915 and at St. Mandé, and with one exception, they are much less academic in composition and rougher and bolder in execution.

In his sketchbook *JC*, Charlot records in pencil his stay at the Villa St. Louis during the summer of 1911 along with his sister and his Mexican relatives.⁹⁴ A photograph of Louis Goupil and some of his visitors at the time is labeled "1911 Le Jardin de Poissy"; the photograph can be used along with others to study Charlot's drawings of the same subjects. Especially important were Raquel (or Rachel) and Doly Labadie, born respectively on April 2, 1900, and September 27, 1904; their mother, Raquel Suárez, had died young in March of that year, and the visit to relatives in France was perhaps intended to distract them. In the photograph, Raquel is a big girl and is already turning into a young woman; Doly is very much a pretty little girl with long curls.

The drawings accord with Charlot's general artistic searching of that summer. They are all portraits and full-length figures done from life and from different angles; Charlot is pushing his observation of the human body to a new level. He even reduces chairs and hammocks to sketchy lines, rendering those objects transparent in order to see the human body without obstruction or distraction. Charlot first uses several light pencil lines to describe the outline he is observing; this gives him a narrow width within which he can decide on the best line. Once he does this, he draws over the outline with a heavier, decisive line. Sometimes as in 4, he erases the earlier lines; most often, he just leaves them, since the heavier line makes his decision clear. These are experimental sketches rather than finished drawings. The results reveal some beginner's awkwardness; Charlot's portrait of Henri (1) could have been produced the year before, and Charlot abandons the attempt to portray one of the older women relatives (3). This summer, Charlot was more at ease with his younger relatives, and in drawing them, he creates the impression of a real body and person. One of the most successful drawings is *Rachel se reposant* (4); she is lying on a folding chair with her hands above her head in a sort of young Odalisque pose. The figure is very graceful on the straight lines of the chair, and Charlot's burgeoning sensuality can be felt more clearly than in *Mathilde*. *Rachel en bras de chemise* (7) and *Rachel cousant* (9) are equally serious figure studies, though less sensuous.

Most of the other drawings are tinged with affectionate humor. *Odette travaillant* (2) shows her sleeping in a hammock still holding onto a sheet of paper, a pet in her lap. *Odette de dos* (5) and *Odette de pieds* (6) show her awake and reading from difficult three-quarter angles; the former expresses particularly well the curve of the hammock. *Dolie se balançant* (10) is a deliberately comic drawing: the little girl sinks ungracefully deep into the hammock, leaving just her feet on the left end and the top of her head on the right poking up above the netting. The drawings communicate the relaxed summer

atmosphere with loving relatives. Among other activities, Charlot produced an elaborate puppet play, described below.

Doly was the object of gentle teasing that summer, which continued in a drawing and letter Charlot sent respectively to her and Raquel after their return to Mexico.⁹⁵ The drawing is a double, contrasting portrait of Doly: on the left she is portrayed as a glamorous but properly demure young Mexican lady; on the right, as a gleeful little girl. At the top right is a heart pierced by an arrow; the heart has a face with crying eyes and Henri Charlot's crew-cut. Doly explained the image in her letter to me of December 6, 1980 (I have retained the misspellings):

Je t'adjoints aussi la copie d'une carte postale que Jean a dessiné et m'a envoyer (le dessin, pour moi, la lettre était pour Rachel) Se dessin a son histoire, il faut la savoir pour le comprendre. J'aimais beaucoup Mr. Goupil (Bon Papa) qui a été pour moi si gentil, et si bon ! Alors j'avais sept ans et je me disais amoureuse de ton Grand Père, mon oncle Henri, qui avec une grande et incroyable patience m'écoutait parler des fêtes, du carrosse, des cheveux du jour de notre mariage et feignais me correspondre !! en plus ces intéressantes conversations devaient avoir lieu étant tous seuls les deux !!

Oncle Henri coupait ses cheveux à la brosse, c'est pour cela que le petit cœur en haut du dessin et qui représente mon oncle, pleurant mon absence, a aussi les cheveux en brosse.

'I attach also the copy of a postcard that Jean drew and sent me (the drawing for me; the letter was for Rachel). This drawing has its history, which needs to be known to understand it. I loved very much Mr. Goupil (Grampa), who was so nice to me and so good! I was seven years old then and stated that I was in love with your Grandfather, my uncle Henri, who with great and incredible patience listened to me talking about feasts, a carriage, some horses, the day of our marriage, and pretended to respond!! Moreover, these interesting conversations must have occurred while we were alone together!!

Uncle Henri had a crew-cut. That is why the little heart at the top of the drawing, which represents my uncle weeping over my absence, also has a crewcut.'

For all its humor, the caricature along with the strongly characterized face of *Mathilde* define the problem that most young men feel about women and that will become apparent in Charlot's early relationships: the conflict between the appreciation of women as persons and as objects of desire.

In the latter part of 1911, besides a number of individual drawings and paintings, Charlot illuminated Moreau's *Contes à ma Sœur* as a graduation present for Odette and painted the friezes for his room, discussed below. With the exception of *Flowers in a Pitcher with Blue Design*⁹⁶ and a few passages in *Contes à ma Sœur*, little or no childish quality remains; they could be mistaken for the works of an adult artist. Whereas *Flowers in a Pitcher with Blue Design* resembles the quiet flower pictures of

Henri that Charlot dated circa 1906, *Flowers*⁹⁷ portrays the subject as dynamic and living, even numinous; they express Charlot's already individual view of nature.

*Sabot de Vénus*⁹⁸ is an elegant work any adult artist would be proud of. A brown, spotted orchid is studied from different angles, with emphasis on its interior. The drawings are interrelated in a complicated composition and have been arranged beautifully on the page. A thin margin has been drawn around the page, leaving more room at the bottom for the title; with perhaps a touch of Oriental influence, Charlot has allowed the flowers to cross over that margin. Charlot develops here a technique he will use extensively in his illuminations of *Le Miroir des Heures* by Henri de Régnier. He makes a tentative drawing in pencil; he then covers this with a thin ink line, and finally paints in wash. This is an extension of his technique in his summer sketchbook *JC* in which he made his final line in pencil. This solution, I feel, satisfied Charlot's need for both line and color, although Charlot would continue his wash experiments at least through 1915.

After the numerous survivals of artworks for 1911, the survival of only one painting dated 1912 and another that can perhaps be assigned to that year is disappointing. The pencil and watercolor *Poissy*⁹⁹ is a mature artwork, with the expectable progress in perspective and expertise in painting and the use of white reserves. Charlot uses architecture to provide the geometric composition, as he had done already, for instance, in *wood pile. Boat upside down covered w. tarpaulin* in *Sketchbook 1905 (1907)* (13). The pencil drawing is extensive and is most often as prominent as the wash in creating the final image. Charlot's work may still be varying in maturity, if the undated and stylistically less mature *Garden at Poissy*¹⁰⁰—a scene already taken as a subject by Charlot—was done in 1912 rather than 1911, as Charlot himself later speculated. Charlot's first print, his bookplate with his artistic signature, can be dated to 1912. I believe also that Charlot began his illustrations of Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures* in late 1911 or early 1912, as discussed below.

The only works dated 1913 are Charlot's series of thirteen watercolors and one color pencil drawing done at Bournemouth, England.¹⁰¹ Charlot made two trips to England, in 1912 and 1913, staying on the southern coast. Three photographs survive from the first trip of Charlot, Odette, Raquel (?), and two male friends; two are marked with the information that they were taken at Ramsgate and Margate in September 1912. Another photograph of three men bowling and two men sitting on a bench is described on the back in Charlot's early hand: "Mr Osborne jouant aux boules—Bexhille-on-Sea 1913" 'Mr. Osborne bowling— Bexhille-on-Sea 1913.'

The numbering used is based on the order the watercolors were in when I studied them in the early 1970s; it is not necessarily chronological. Based on subject matter and coloring, number 13 seems close to numbers 1 through 5; 6 to 8 and 9; and 7 to 10 through 12; but Charlot could have been working at the same site at different times. The style is generally consistent, although an interesting range can be observed between the watercolors closer to his earlier works (4, 8) and those moving beyond them (especially 2, 3, 6, 13). This can be seen particularly in the pencil outlines that range from more complete to the most minimal of any of Charlot's watercolors. The stylistic differences cut across the subject

groupings listed above, suggesting that his style was variable, a characteristic of his early work. In all cases, however, the images are formed mostly with wash, and the perspective is faultless and easy.

In contrast to *Five Watercolors Done on the Seine at Poissy*, color does not always seem an exact rendering of observation. Rather, Charlot seems to be strengthening and manipulating his colors for effect. Charlot is no longer concentrating on rendering his observations as accurately as possible; he is working more freely to create striking images with larger masses and areas of color. Color notations on the paintings themselves may indicate that he was even coloring them off the site or thinking of working these sketches up into larger works. Some color notations on versos may refer to watercolors that have not survived. Charlot was thus retracing the movement from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism. The evidence of the artworks is that he was doing this through the logic of his own development, as a young artist going “through a number of schools nearly in chronological order” (Interview September 14, 1970). The development must have been experienced as internal, but it was of course realized within a historical context in which the path had already been cleared: examples could draw the young artist forward and his teachers—whom Charlot described as “just between Academism and Impressionism and very able at it” (Interview September 14, 1970)—could push him from behind.

Charlot was obviously stimulated by the English seacoast with its chalk cliffs, dark forests, and richly beflowered gardens. *Seacoast with Bird* (5) displays the nonnaturalistic, expressive colors he was now using: a heavy blue at the top of the sky, a light rose spilling over onto the far hills and the water, with the foreground water green. The washes play freely against the pencil outlines. Charlot has drawn a more detailed outline than usual for *House and Trees* (7) of the unaccustomed architecture and planting, but his washes are again very free and combine several colors to create a sun-drenched atmosphere. Charlot signed and dated *House entrance and garden* (10), and it is indeed successful. House and garden are united in the sparkling light created with white reserves and washes. The house is painted more sketchily than the flowers; the drawing describes the square of the window, but the painting ignores those lines for the darkness behind the panes. In *Row of houses, walk, and little river* (12), Charlot paints a garden suburb, with the water in faultless perspective leading into the painting towards the colorful roofs.

Church may belong to this series.¹⁰² A brick wall on the right serves as a repoussoir and emphasizes the foreground shadows that contrast with the full sunlight on the small Gothic church. The viewer seems to walk up the small hill on which the church is placed, an effect created by the contrast in light, by the connection of the red brick to the red tiles of the tower roof, and by the long diagonal shadow rising towards the church from the right bottom edge. The strong sunlight dissolves the details of the gothic church into its basic shapes. The whitest light falls on the attached buttresses projecting outwards from the entrance wall; since the church is seen from a slight angle, each buttress appears very different in the light. Charlot later admired the same effect in Vermeer’s *Girl with a Red Hat* (ca. 1665): the identical lion-head carving on each chair arm appears different because of the angle of the light. The known form is transformed in natural vision. Finally, the pretty coloring of the watercolor is used expressively; for instance, the angle of the church is articulated by the yellow to red to purple colors at the tops of the church’s three blocks as it recedes in space.

Several sketches in the series strike out in new directions. *Bushy forest scene* (6) appears at first to be a mass of green, but irregular forms emerge through different shades and somehow end up in a complicated balance. Charlot's *Forest Scene* of 1914, done at Caplain summer place, is the only similar work that survives. *White bluffs and sea* (2) is a simplified image for which pencil has been used to outline the most essential elements: the shape of the cliff, the line of the beach, two slight bumps for human figures, and the horizon. The wash and white reserves are used for large areas, further simplifying the image. Human figures provide the scale for the chalk cliffs, which are seen from below, adding to the impression of their monumentality. The large reserves and intense colors create the impression of a strong, unifying light. The grand scale and sweep of *Beach and sea* (13) have been produced with the same devices. *Man harvesting hay* (3) is the most innovative of all the sketches. Just a few lines in pencil provide reminders for the very wet washes. The diminutive human figure—done in a little more detail and accented with a touch of sharp red on his hat—seems almost lost in the deep and wide landscape being pounded by the sun.

Charlot's next works date, I would argue, from the school year 1913–1914, the year he received a second prize for drawing at Condorcet. He identified *Man with Bleeding Pig*,¹⁰³ which I have mentioned above, as “homework for school. = theme given.” The drawing is done delicately in very light crayon, with a stronger coloring of the pig and the blood flowing from it (possibly a correction by the teacher). The perspective, especially on the house on the rise, is faultless. But the sense of space and the placement of the figures differ from Charlot's usual work and were probably done under instruction from the teacher. Along with *Schoolboys in the Street*, this picture represented for Charlot the negative effects of academic teaching. In November 1913, he complained in the poem *Un long et lourd regret a fait de moi sa chose* how he was being forced by daily schoolwork to strangle the golden dream, the phantom, that had meant so much to him.

Perhaps in protest, he drew on the verso what he described as a “street scene = from the balcony at Chaussée d'Antin”: *Street Scene Night*.¹⁰⁴ The format is vertical instead of the horizontal of *Man with Bleeding Pig*, and the crayon strokes are heavier, bolder, and calligraphic. The perspective has been strongly manipulated to create a sense of the movement of space being sucked down the street; Charlot is now completely sure in his perspective and can distort it expressively. The color, rather than being observed, is equally expressive with its contrast of dark blue strokes for the architecture and yellow ones for the glowing windows. Probably done at the same time is *Street Scene Sunrise*, looking west down the Rue de la Victoire as the sun rises behind the artist.¹⁰⁵ The tops of the buildings glow orange, while the gray-blue shadows of the cavernous street are only beginning to be tinged with pink. As usual at this time, the Impressionistic wash overlies a more detailed initial drawing; people and cars become blobs of color.

The undated but signed *House and Garden* is closely related to *Street Scene Night*; Charlot described it as “house and garden = Poissy, seen from back.” The strokes are similarly bold and move in the same direction to provide unity. The house tips unrealistically towards the left, which renders it more imposing and balances the composition. Again, Charlot is less concerned with depicting the house

realistically than with creating a striking work of art. On the verso, several outlines or diagrams seem to be studies of the effect of tipping in composition.

The first great divide in Charlot's life occurred in June 1914, with the beginning of World War I and his father's breakdown. Several works that probably predate those events continue Charlot's earlier tendencies. *Forest Scene*,¹⁰⁶ signed and dated 1914, was "done [at] Chaumontel, the Caplain summer place" and resembles *Bushy forest scene* (6) of the Bournemouth Series. In the main, the light pencil lines have not been followed, but serve occasionally to suggest thin branches within the wash. Some dark brown wash has been used for trunks. The final effect is almost entirely of different green washes in irregular and indistinct shapes that somehow produce a balanced effect.

The pencil and wash *Poppies*,¹⁰⁷ signed and dated 1914, may be the drawing Charlot referred to in the interview of October 31, 1970: "And somewhere I have for example studies of poppies in liberty, if we could say, in freedom, just as they were growing out of the ground." Charlot had been fascinated by that sight since early childhood, and such enracinated flowers can be found in *Juvenilia 1904*. The poppies are shown very much as individuals, living and striving, thus expressing Charlot's general view: "you can make the portrait of a person or of a dog, or of a tree. Each one is a mystery in the very real sense of the word" (Interview August 7, 1971). The drawing is unusually complete and equal in importance to the wash in conveying the image. For instance, inside the outlines of the flowers and leaves, the lines provide even more of the form than the light washes. *Poppies* is thus at the opposite end of the drawing-wash spectrum from *Forest Scene*.

The most balanced coordination of drawing and coloring can be found in one of Charlot's most achieved works, *Pots and Garden Furniture at Poissy*,¹⁰⁸ which I would date 1914 or 1915. Charlot has used his light, crumbly, black crayon line to draw the outlines of the objects; this procedure can be compared to the more complete drawings of the Bournemouth Series and especially to the illuminations for Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures*. But within and around the outlines—the ground, the sides of the pots, the leaves of the plants in the pots, and so on—the washes are the means of description. That description is however as coloristic as Charlot's earlier paintings of water. Color is not local, but evocative, in continual communion with all the other colors and the general light. The rich colors—often laid on as spots of wash—join together with seeming effortlessness. Charlot combines in this work his observation, his expressive manipulations, and his desire to construct a legible composition. One feels he has reached a comfortable balance of line and color, one which will be found also in his illuminations of Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures*. In these works, he achieves the culmination of his early artwork before moving on to his stylistically different liturgical period.

3.4.4. BOOK DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION

Charlot's lifelong interest in illustration and book design are already evident in *Juvenilia 1904*, in which some of the earliest drawings illustrate stories, and text and illustration are coordinated to design a page. He designs the page for an undated but very early schoolboy letter to his mother, discussed above: he circles the printed vignette and adds a line separating the heading of the page from the part he

will use for his text. Charlot could see numerous illustrated books in his family's library, notably Bing, and he would later use his allowance to buy old or fancy volumes in the used book stalls along the quais of the Seine and at the flea market.

In Charlot's youth, a whole movement of beautifying books with original illuminations was underway, and he felt he had certainly been influenced by the exhibitions he had seen of books with watercolor illuminations in the margins.¹⁰⁹ Charlot remembered the connection between that movement and his own illuminations and the impact they had on his work in other genres:

Well, it was at the time fashionable, I would say, to have people take books of poems and illustrate them. I don't know where or how I knew that, and saw probably exhibited some of those poor books who had been ornamented with vignettes of a very light effect that didn't spoil the page, I would say, or even the type, and I decided to do the same; that's all. And then there was an Albert Samain, for example, which I thought was very poetical. I was doing myself some verses that were very poetical at the time, and I thought he was a wonderful poetical poet, so I decided to match his poetry with my watercolors. I don't think it was terribly successful, but I learned, of course, that if I worked too much on the page, I spoiled the effect, and I learned a certain lightness of touch by which the paper shone, so to speak, the white of the paper shone through the film of watercolor. And—in retrospect, of course, I imagine retrospect; I didn't know at the time anything about fresco—I realized that perhaps that decision to let the white of the page speak for itself was something that helped me later on in taking a decision to let the white of the lime in the fresco painting speak for itself, that is, a certain humility in front of the material on which I paint, be it of paper or mortar. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Charlot had little sympathy with the purist counter-movement that forbade “tampering” with printed books. On the contrary, he characteristically pushed his studies into earlier book illuminations, like the Emperor Maximilian's Bible, illustrated by Dürer, Cranach, and others (Tabletalk February 12, 1972). Anita Brenner reports that he “strained his eyes on medieval books” (Brenner 1970: 303 f.).

Two childhood book covers by Charlot have survived, and he remembered that he had done covers for two or three volumes by a famous French etymologist. He thought he had done these about the time he painted the cover for the Chateaubriand volume discussed below and guessed he was between ten and twelve years old, or from 1908 to 1910.

The less mature of the two surviving book covers was done on a sheet of paper for a bilingual French-Spanish edition of extracts from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.¹¹⁰ On the front, Charlot has drawn a large picture of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; on the back is a vignette of a windmill with a human face. The images have been drawn first with pencil and then covered with pen and ink. The careful drawing seems nearest to those dated 1909; I would date the cover from 1908 to 1909. The title drawing makes the personalities of the two characters humorously clear, and their mounts face off against each other as well. Tall and short are contrasted but compositionally balanced by thin and fat. The foreground

is supported by the background: two mountain cliffs, each drawn with a single line. Charlot has attempted some compositional effect with the obvious diagonal of the lance, but I do not see how it fits into an overall design. The most accomplished drawing is the vignette on the back cover; it anticipates the sophisticated wit of the boxing friezes Charlot made later for his room.

The second surviving cover is for a volume by Chateaubriand, done in pencil, ink, and watercolor.¹¹¹ A flower design with lettering adorns the front; an oval with flowers, the spine; and a vignette of flowers, the back. The images and calligraphic flourishes are unusually decorative and exquisite; the lettering is less mature. Stylistically, the cover is nearest to Charlot's watercolor illustrations for a book of poems by Henri de Régnier, discussed below; in fact the same design of a rose can be found on page 10 of that work. Unfortunately, that book cannot be dated precisely.

While I was in France, Odette showed me a book that, if memory serves, was the earliest Charlot illustrated: it was a children's story, and a striking illustration was of many little brown mice scurrying around the margins of a page. Odette said that the illustration gave her a strong sense of the movement of the mice. Charlot did not remember this book or the one he did for Odette, discussed below (October 31, 1970).

Charlot's earliest surviving book illuminations are for *Contes à ma Sœur* by Hégésippe Moreau, as mentioned previously.¹¹² Odette inserted a card into the book with the note: "Ce livre a été illustré par Jean Charlot lorsqu'il était âgé [*sic*] de 13 ans" 'This book was illustrated by Jean Charlot when he was thirteen years old.' The book was Charlot's gift to his sister—the book may have been chosen for its title—on the occasion of her passing her baccalauréat examination in June; a dedication caricature on the title page shows Odette dressed for school and holding a scroll with the words "Bachot passé par Odette Charlot" 'Bacc passed by Odette Charlot.' Charlot was thirteen years old in 1911, which is the same year he did two large drawings of Odette doing her schoolwork; one of these has been labeled in another hand: "Odette Charlot/Février 1911/préparation au baccalauréat" 'Odette Charlot/February 1911/preparation for the baccalauréat.' In the sketchbook *JC*, which can also be dated to 1911, three drawings show Odette reading and resting; one of her sleeping is titled *Odette travaillant*.

Charlot followed his standard practice of drawing first in pencil and then going over the line in pen and ink; the skeleton on page 6 has been left incomplete in pencil. He can omit the ink, however, to create a more painterly, impressionistic effect, the pencil line taking on a silvery tone (7, 11, 12, 15). The results are very atmospheric and evocative, befitting the medieval subject matter. Charlot will use these same techniques in his next book illumination.

Charlot is clearly delighting in the compositional problems of book illumination and the solutions he is finding. He has one of his mice settle on a page title as if it were a bench (6). A top margin is devoted to heaven while the side margins are given over to hell; the bottom margin is the scene of a beheading (7). As in an early composition in *Juvenilia 1904*, a big tree trunk grows out of the center bottom margin, continues lightly drawn through the text as if behind a gauze curtain, and branches out in full color in the top margin; from the branches men hang by the neck down the side margins while their cadavers are eaten by crows (8). A heavy curtain descends the left margin onto the floor at the bottom,

where a little mouse emerges from under its folds. On the floor, a metal plate emits spectre-filled steam that rises up the left margin and across the top (9). Smoke from a torch on the left and a curving staircase on the right curl similarly around the text (15).

All of the illustrations are wonderfully coloristic. A night scene is all purples and dark rose, as one looks down at the people in the town square and up in extreme perspective at a man hanging from the castle tower (12). Charlot has been particularly successful at conveying textures: the heavy cloth of a curtain, a handsome ceramic pot, and a metallic shiny plate (9). Everywhere his wit shines through: the mouse peeking out from behind a curtain (9) and another reading a large Altar Missal in front of a crucifix (11).

Charlot has clearly been looking at other art. His portrait of King Louis XI seems to be based on an old portrait, and the very accurate skeleton (6) might be compared to one in Bing (1888: 93). Charlot's marginal illuminations of twisting vines around the full-page printed illustration on page 13 recall Medieval scroll work, complete with gold glitter. His subjects can, however, be traced back to *Juvenilia 1904*: fantastic animals confronting each other, monsters with animal bodies and human faces, and flowers with faces. A certain mixture of styles is noticeable: page 10 contains a very Western eagle along with Orientalizing plants.

Charlot will continue many of the artistic interests of this book into the next one he illuminates—Henri de Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures*—such as composition on the page, textures, and color effects (he will also continue his general lack of interest in coordinating double pages). Pages 12 and 15 of this earlier book are very close to the illuminations of the later. But Charlot will progress in the simplicity of means he uses and in his emphasis on the overall lighting rather than local color. Nonetheless, *Contes à ma Sœur* is an accomplishment in its own right; indeed, although some of the illuminations are clearly a child's work, it would be difficult to guess that those on pages 9, 12, and 15, had not been made by an adult.

Charlot's numerous illuminations for Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures* are a culminating point of the art of his childhood and youth in both the techniques and the subjects he had developed.¹¹³ They also indicate a direction of exquisite, decorative charm he ultimately did not follow, creating instead the severe liturgical style of his work with La Gilde Notre-Dame. The illuminations are a final reminder of this, Charlot's happy early period.

Unfortunately, the dating of the illuminations raises problems. The book was published in 1911, but the only illumination dated is from 1915 (173); the painting resembles others in the book, so the date is not merely the record of a late intrusion. Moreover, many of the illuminations are similar in style and technique to works dated late 1914. However, in technique and interest in exoticism, *Miroir* seems continuous with the illuminations for *Contes à ma Sœur*. In style, the illuminations that appear the earliest in *Miroir* resemble those in *Contes*, especially the galleon section on page 196 and the candles on page 215.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the Oriental influence on composition—which will become covert at best in Charlot's later career—is as strong as in his earlier works, resembling the painting *Sabot de Vénus* of 1911.¹¹⁵ Finally, Régnier's poems belong to an early period of Charlot's literary taste, from Parnassian to

Decadent. I believe he misspoke “Albert Samain” in the interview of October 31, 1970, but was in fact referring to this book by Régnier:

there was an Albert Samain, for example, which I thought was very poetical. I was doing myself some verses that were very poetical at the time, and I thought he was a wonderful poetical poet, so I decided to match his poetry with my watercolors. I don’t think it was terribly successful...

Charlot connects these illustrations to his own composition of similar poems; in fact, Régnier’s poem *L’Intrus* (124 f.) resembles some of Charlot’s. However, most of his poems of that tendency were written in 1913 and earlier; through 1914, he was already moving into his Catholic Renaissance period of poetry, a process that was complete by 1915. In fact, in fragments of his poems of 1913 can be found descriptions of colors and scenes that resemble the illuminations:

fouillis de glaïeuls hauts et de pois de senteur
multicolore et chatoyant dans la lumière
le coin rustique et clair où la vie exubère
ondule sous ces pas en frissons de couleur.

.....

Je rêve d’un soir rose avec des arbres mauves
encerclant un grand lac, fermé comme une alcôve
où la tristesse grise en clarté d’or se fonde.

.....

or c’était dans le parc classique
le soir tranquille et fantastique
bleuissait les marbres antiques.

‘tangles of tall gladioli and sweet peas
multicolored and shimmering in the light
the rustic, light-filled corner where life is exuberant
undulates under these steps in shivers of color.

.....

I dream of a rose evening with mauve trees
encircling a large lake, closed like an alcove
where gray sadness melts in golden light.

.....

and it was in the classic park
the tranquil and fantastic night
colored the antique marbles blue.

I can understand Charlot continuing a Romantic series into 1915, but not initiating one then. I would argue, therefore, that the illumination of the book was started not long after the work on *Contes à ma Sœur*—that is, in late 1911 or early 1912—and that Charlot continued working on it over several years as a sort of recreation from his severer work. Indications of this piecemeal, long-term process—besides the sheer quantity of the illuminations—are that Charlot was skipping around in the book, leaving certain drawings unpainted, and marking on the table of contents those works he had done. A variation in style can be noted; for instance, the galleon on page 196 is very early in style, but the drawing and painting to the left of it seem later—indeed the horizon line changes! Moreover, certain illuminations can be connected to datable works. The rose on page 10 is the same one as on his cover of the book by Chateaubriand, mentioned above. The orchids on page 28 are the same as those in *Sabot de Vénus* of 1911. Charlot's bedroom window at the Chaussée d'Antin, looking out over the rooftops (124, information provided by Charlot) recalls his *Twelve Watercolors of Rooftops and Skyscapes* of the same year. The drawing seems to be done from life, so the illumination can be dated prior to the family's move to St. Mandé in June 1915. The sun-beaten desert tents (111) recall the *Man harvesting hay* of the Bournemouth Series of 1913, as does the subject of page 168, although the style differs. White-capped mountains (201) recall the white chalk cliffs of the same series. The distortions of perspective in a Roman street scene (49) can be compared to those of *Street Scene* of 1913–1914. The blue-gray flowers on page 136 are strikingly close to his *Poppies* of 1914, offering a less romantic image than usual in the book (the light drawing of a house and garden on the same page show that he had originally planned an image more in accord with the other illuminations). The dead bird of page 189 may be related to his *Three Studies of a Dead Bird* from 1914. A curious seraglio scene (75), drawn but not painted, recalls an experience in England in 1912 or 1913:

I sneaked in [unintelligible] was a lowbrow-music hall. I doubt that the parson knew about it. I don't remember the details. But there was a scene in, I think, a Turkish Harem, and the ladies I think nowadays would have looked fully clothed, but there was a belly dancer, and I remember I was quite astonished at such goings on. It's a very vivid thing in my memory, gave me a certain desire to go and visit such lands as Turkey and Egypt. At the time it may have added to my sense of other worlds that had unusualnesses that I didn't know about. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Unlike *Contes*, *Miroir* is undedicated, which suggests that he was doing it for himself. That Charlot continued to appreciate the book is indicated by his placing in it his ex libris "Jean Charlot me crut sien," which dates from the Occupation period after the war.

Charlot follows the technique he had developed earlier and used in *Sabot de Vénus*. The image was first drawn with light pencil lines; full examples can be easily seen in the illuminations that were never developed beyond this state.¹¹⁶ These pencil lines were then covered selectively and with modifications with thin ink lines; for instance, the horizon line has been changed on page 111. As before, some pencil lines were left deliberately uncovered for their own effect (11, 15, 66 [without ink]). In some images, I cannot see any pencil marks, so Charlot may have occasionally worked freehand in ink, a sign of his growing confidence; in other cases, he may have lightly erased the pencil lines after inking. Finally, the image was painted with wash, introducing further modifications to the image. In this work as

in others of the same time, Charlot achieved a comfortable collaboration of line and wash; both contribute essentially to the image, although varying in emphasis from work to work. For instance, on page 193, ink is used for solid objects and their shadows on the water, and wash for the sky and water; on page 134, he uses ink for the dark sections of a still life and leaves them out for the light ones. Charlot uses ink prominently for the bushes on page 128, but then relies almost totally on color for the neighboring tree. The ink line seems to predominate on pages 111 and 113, but colors create the most striking effects in the majority of the illuminations.

Charlot's use of line is similar to his earlier works. He uses strokes of the same direction to unify an image (11, 34, 55). He delights in calligraphic effects (53). A sign of the greater importance given to line is its use along with color to express the atmosphere of the light (17, 26), the oily surface of water (71), and the more dramatic, stagey effects of subjects from Shakespeare (101, 104). Lines are also used in more original ways: on page 67, vertical ink strokes describe the shadowy side of the sky and accord with the vertical of the poplar; horizontal strokes are then used for the sea and diagonals for the shadow of a wall.

The immediately striking quality of the illuminations is the use of color, whose variety of combination and intensity reveals Charlot's unusual visual sensitivity and motor control. Colors range from the finest, lightest tints, to richly saturated Mediterranean colors that Charlot probably used in his puppet sets and that evoke the later Moroccan subjects of Matisse (69, 73, 145, 172, 211). Charlot is particularly interested in the soft colors of faded flowers (17), moonlight and crepuscular scenes, and *contre-lumière* and drawn-curtain effects (19, 32, 38 f., 41, 67, 79, 130, 134); on page 99, the sunset turns the red roses purple. He enjoys playing with odd color combinations (28, 42 f., 132, 151, 170, 187). Charlot would not again place such emphasis on light and color until he came to Hawai'i in 1949.

The color effects were not achieved by simple means. On page 19, a night scene in a classical garden is described in unusually light tones to convey the moonlight, which is so strong that it casts shadows. The sky was first painted with a light purple using horizontal strokes; these were then overpainted with vertical strokes of blue. Finally, small dots of white paint were used to mark the stars. The ground was then painted in horizontal purple strokes, and the shaped trees in vertical blue ones. The picture is thus unified by the use of horizontal purple strokes for both the ground and the underpainting of the sky and by vertical blue strokes for the trees and the overpainting of the sky. The use of complicated means to achieve apparently simple but visually rich effects was a continuing characteristic of Charlot's art; he created similar effects in his late serigraphs done at the Honolulu Sign Company. In the same way, his painting of a classic Egyptian Delta scene for a poem on Anthony and Cleopatra—one of the most successful combinations of line and color—uses two washes for the sky and a flat wash and some horizontal strokes for the water, echoing a few horizontal ink lines (89). Paper reserves are used effectively throughout for sparkle and the description of light and form (14, 15, 17, 21, 23, 53, 67).

Charlot's use of his observation of light is clear throughout the book, for instance, in the paintings of multicolored water (55 ff., 63). Just as in his 1913 series of Paris rooftops and skylscapes, Charlot notes the varied colors of sunset (41) and the Impressionistic effects of light on architecture and

sculpture (63, 82, 117, 193). He goes so far as to dissolve form in light (67). In a night scene, the moonlight melts the cube of a roadside inn, whose unseen front door emits a white light that oozes around the corner of the house and streams across the road, becoming progressively yellow and turning a tree trunk into a lighter version of its daytime color (21). Warm lamplight contrasts with cool moonlight.

Most of the subjects emerge obviously from Charlot's own imagination, and his earlier observations of light are clearly being put to the service of the decoration of the very romantic poems, whose verses they illustrate and whose mood they evoke. Even the violence mentioned in the poem on page 172 is made part of the rich coloring. The humor so evident in *Contes* pokes through only occasionally, for instance, in the exaggeration of the cobwebs on a vase in a Gothic scene (79). On page 189, Charlot illustrates "Le rossignol gémir..." the moaning of the nightingale, with a bird that is dead and flat on its back. Charlot's taste in poetry had probably changed by the time he reached those illuminations!

Charlot uses many of the page design techniques developed in *Contes*: for instance, parts of the image trail down the margins or onto the facing page (17, 38 f., 163), and the type can be integrated into the image.¹¹⁷ As in the earlier book, only an occasional effort is made to coordinate facing pages, and even separate vignettes on the same page can be uncoordinated (36, 182), probably another indication of the piecemeal fashion in which he worked on this book. The compositions are less geometric than *Orientalizing*: a studied but seemingly casual placement of the image on the page. More Western is the use of a tree as a frame and a repoussoir for the landscape (13, 23, 53). The elements that are new in relation to *Contes* are the interesting distortions¹¹⁸ and the wonderful sweep of the images, similar to that in some of the Bournemouth Series, and displaying an easy mastery of perspective (11, 193, 204).

These illuminations for *Le Miroir des Heures* constitute the high point—if not the extreme point of the Bournemouth Series—of Charlot's Impressionist work. In his next period, he made a fundamental decision to emphasize line, a decision based on his preference for meaningful narrative, geometric composition, and mural scale as opposed to impression and decoration. The decision was also based on his deepest view of nature:

I take very seriously my models when I do landscapes. That is, I look at the tree, and I have the same respect for the tree that I would have for a person that would pose for me. I try to see things from the tree's point of view. So I've never been able, really, to use nature as a pretext for color, even as a pretext for lights and darks. I cannot make a difference between studying from the model—that is, a man or a woman—or studying from a tree or a flower. (Interview October 31, 1970)

3.4.5. THEATRE

Charlot's lifelong interest in theatre reaches into his early childhood (John Charlot "Hawaiian Plays" 1998: 6). In *Juvenilia 1904* (16a recto), his English governess drew herself and a very small Jean watching a Punch and Judy show in a park; the two battling puppets are Punch and Napoleon. In the same sketchbook, Charlot drew and signed a picture of two sword-fighters in an enclosure that looks like

a puppet theater. Charlot kept his puppet of a polar bear, which is now in the Jean Charlot Collection. Such puppet theater is impressive, even to an esthete like the novelist Gustave Flaubert (John Charlot 1976: 26), and has ancient roots in the folk culture. Its nonnaturalistic style influenced Charlot's own taste in ethnic theater and in theatrical design and writing (John Charlot 1998: 6–9). He continued his work in puppet theatre, through his Náhuatl plays in Mexico and his puppet set design in Colorado to his incorporation into his Hawaiian plays of the *hula ki'i* 'image hula,' which he also depicted in a number of artworks.¹¹⁹ Charlot designed the sets and costumes and created the props for his own play *Na'auao: the Light Within*, and did similar work for plays by other authors. Charlot proved a good actor, funny as Joseph in *My Three Angels* and evil as the Prospector in *The Madwoman of Chaillot*.¹²⁰

Charlot states that puppet theater also influenced his thinking as an adolescent through Léon Bloy whose "playlets" with their "crude black-and-white, homemade theology" portrayed the rich as bad and the poor as good:

Bloy's flair as a puppeteer delighted the boy in me, who had sat in knee pants only a while before at similar performances, in the open under the *frondages* of the Champs-Élysées. (*Born Catholics* 1954: 103)

This way of thinking had an impact on his art. For instance, when Charlot was first finding and developing his new subjects in Mexico, he did a number of satyric works that contrasted the pompously dressed bourgeois dame to the Indian woman attired in classical simplicity. When I asked Charlot about these works, he stated:

What I was working at, without knowing it, I mean subconsciously, was a sort of, you could call it a puppet theater, so as to orient myself in my work as a painter. That is, I had to reject certain images, and I had to accept other images. And I have been quite faithful all my life, actually, to the image of the Indian as a sort of a model for my pictures. (Interview October 18, 1972)

Charlot would discuss three-dimensional composition in terms of puppet stages, for instance, in his lectures *Pictures and Picture-Making* and in describing his first mural in Hawai'i, *Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawai'i* (1949). His remark on Honoré Daumier might be applicable to Charlot himself:

The hand puppets of the Champs-Élysées had taught Daumier gestures more telling in their staccato simplicity than those of live actors, a knowledge he memorized and used to quicken the grasp of the readers of *Le Charivari* on his graphic story-telling. (1980: 86)

Specific images of Charlot's seem related to puppet theatre; the line of Aztec gods in his illustration of Paul Claudel's "The Gods Churn the Sea" (1929) looks like a puppet theatre device Charlot used when young: cutouts attached to and animated by two horizontal sticks.

From the surviving evidence, Charlot was particularly active in theater in 1910 and 1911. His *Grand Théâtre d'Ombre Chinoise*¹²¹ consists of a sheet cut and painted like a proscenium with a transparent paper over the stage opening. A long band of figures in silhouette, similar to his 1907 cutouts,

was pulled through two side openings in the sheet and across the window, probably as a story was told. The figures are all Oriental, Turkish exotica; men wearing turbans with plumes. The silhouettes are very expressive, and the figure of a donkey is particularly good.

In Charlot's *Sketchbook 1910*, pages 17–30 are devoted to what Charlot described in the 1970s as a “project for puppet theater,” which consisted of seven sets.¹²² A photograph of one of the completed sets was printed in postcard format, and Odette Charlot provided the information that it was made by Charlot and his childhood friend Pierre Marquet.¹²³ The sketchbook demonstrates, however, that Charlot was the designer of the sets.

The plot is apparently a romantic story of shipwreck on an Orientalizing, Turkish-style shore, complete with elaborately costumed heroine. The first act is in a wooded mountain with snow-covered trees, drawn as Charlot's father had done in *Juvenilia 1904*: a straightish line for the branches with wavy lines underneath to suggest the snow. The second act is apparently the interior of a studio with rectangles of pictures placed on a wall. The scene then changes to the high seas and then to a “submarine landscape w. wrecked ship” (Charlot). The idea is grandiose, and the first sketches for it are very quick and sure. In the most finished drawing, the sinuous underwater trees form a labyrinth of trunks and branches. Big underwater flowers resemble the ones Charlot would do later for Elizabeth Arden. The story then moves to a Turkish-style city, for which several sets were done. In one, an open balustrade forms a foreground for the puppets. The final set is startlingly simple: sea and sky are divided by a single horizon line. I wrote in the early 1970s: “simplicity remarkable. Attempt to explore great simplification of horizontal line: sky—horizon line—ocean, land.” Charlot then noted: “yes” on both my list of the drawings and on my sheet of comments. In fact, Charlot would use the same composition in his last monumental fresco of 1974 at Leeward Community College, *The Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawaii*.

The sets are conceived, not as flat backdrops, but fully in three dimensions, making complicated use of the three sides of the puppet stage and the ground. Charlot provides ground and perspective plans (“‘ocean’ set seen in perspective”; “ground plan of ‘ocean’ set”; “ground plan w curved backdrop”; “same seen in perspective”; “ground plan for each act”: 1–4 and 5–7) and shows how the sets are to be manipulated (“version of the same with ‘flats’ in place”). Foregrounds and backgrounds are carefully designed to highlight the puppets placed between them. Charlot was clearly interested in the special problems and craft of puppet theater design and was already working on sets in the same way he would for his plays in Hawai’i.

A photograph of the puppet theater itself with the set that was sketched in the twenty-sixth drawing of *Sketchbook 1910*, shows how the plans were realized. The theater itself is large and elaborate; it is conceived as a lattice-work garden pavilion with flowers growing on it and garlands decorating it (the bunches of cherries recall the formula used in *Juvenilia 1904*). Two semiclassical columns, backed by lattice-work walls, join the pediment to the base and are themselves festooned with a garland each. The style of the columns is hard to place. Above the columns are masks: on the left, a serious mask is labeled “Theatre”; on the right, a comic mask of Punch is labeled “Comodia.” Centered on the pediment is a lyre. Above the masks and lyre are portions of a trefoil protruding above the top of the pediment. A large

single garland decorates the base, on which is centered “1910”; the base itself is on a plain horizontal band. The whole puppet theatre is placed on a table-like platform; the top surface is undecorated (which reveals the eye level of the audience), but the vertical front was painted with elaborate floral decorations.

The set follows the sketch but adds elaborate decoration and complicated details. The buildings outlined in the sketch have been fitted with curious architectural elements from many lands and times. The set is conceived in great depth. The foreground is a plaza with the flats, the buildings, placed behind each other. At the far end of the plaza are pillars to which ropes are tied. These disappear as they descend but are conceptually attached to the boats moored below, the sails of which protrude up into sight (compare Sand 1851: 99). On the background sheet is painted a harbor with a fleet of boats. Behind the harbor is a town on a hill, with some perspective leading off into the lower town. Behind the town is a middle range of mountains; a distant range of mountains seems to be behind it, and then a cloudy sky. Even in the black and white photograph, the set appears very colorful; it resembles the Mediterranean illustrations Charlot later painted in the margins of the book of poems by Henri de Régnier, although the drawing is less mature. Charlot has, however, drawn a boldly distorted barrel, probably to allow for the angled vision of the audience. In the front of the set is a false prompter’s box and probably false candles.

A male and female puppet are placed in the set. The puppets themselves look like porcelain dolls; the elaborate costumes have been made for play and accord in style with the set. They are exotically Oriental in intention, although the woman’s seems an elaborated version of the hats and dinner wear of the time. The puppets are held from below, their feet covered by their costumes. No mechanism for moving the hands can be seen.

The above puppet production was clearly a major and impressive effort. Charlot’s Mexican cousin, Doly Labadie, described a different production, done probably during her summer at Poissy in 1911:

Like and [*sic*] artist he is recognize [*sic*] in all the world; every day he surpassed his own person. I remember when he was a boy of 13 or 14 years in Poissy, he realize [*sic*] a work for his school, an escenificated [*sic*] Hell, with persons, flames, lights, realize [*sic*] and painting fantastically [*sic*], that left all of us with our mouth open. My father pronosticated [*sic*] he will be recognized some day like a great artist.¹²⁴

Odette, who had also been impressed by her brother’s puppet productions, told me that he had pinned cutouts of devils at their center points to the front of the stage; the cutouts were then attached to each other by thin rods at their tops and bottoms. When the rods were pushed backwards and forwards, each in the opposite direction, it looked like the line of devils was dancing. Doly Labadie remembers these in her letter to me of December 6, 1980:

pour admirer son chef-d’œuvre, la maquette d’un “enfer” ou les flammes, l’illumination, les petits diables sautants courants dans les plus pittoresques attitudes nous tenaient tous émerveillés.

‘to admire his masterpiece, the model of a “Hell” where the flames, the illumination, the little devils jumping, running, in the most picturesque attitudes held us all amazed.’

No wonder the audience was impressed!

3.4.6. ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION

Related to Charlot’s set designs is his early interest in architectural decoration. Charlot had from early childhood seen murals in churches and museums:

the earliest things—that is, twelfth and thirteenth century frescoes in churches (I had seen whatever was in the museums, but there were also some very good series of facsimile copies that had been made in the nineteenth century)—were things that I liked very much. (Interview October 18, 1970)

In the interview of September 14, 1970, I asked my father: “When were the first moments when you realized that that was the kind of painting [mural painting] you wanted to do?” Charlot answered:

I remember that I had a small closet—again, I must have been very, very small—all to myself in my room was my own closet, and I started doing friezes for it (I think I still have some of them) and decorating the inside of that closet as if it was a little room or little hall or maybe a little church just with those friezes that were made for a specific place.

Later in the same interview, I asked whether decorative friezes could have been bought in stores. He answered:

Well, there was certainly more wallpaper seen then than there is now, especially in the United States; nearly all the rooms of the old-fashioned places had the wallpapers and the bands at the bottom and the top of decorative value, and maybe that was one of the things that suggested to me that relation of painting and walls. It’s quite possible, but of course I had greater examples because you can’t live in Paris or live even in Poissy, which was our summer place, without going into Gothic churches, cathedrals, and whatnot or palaces as well, Versailles and whatnot, and not see the use, of course, of painting in relation to architecture.

JPC: You don’t remember any time that this particularly struck you, say even before you began making the little patterns yourself to be put in your closet—there is no conscious memory of that?

JC: Well, there’s no vocabulary. I just, from the beginning I really was set for a certain sort of task, and really all through my life, I’ve been going at that task when I had the chance to.¹²⁵

The decoration of the cabinet mentioned above was clearly done early in Charlot’s childhood:

And as I told you once, I did some friezes for a sort of a cupboard, which was my own private mystery room. It was a cupboard that was very low. It was in my own room, and I worked in there making a little sort of apartment. It wasn't a doll's house because it was big enough so I could put at least half of myself in it. It was more like a dog house, I would say. But I did ornate it with friezes which I made and small pictures and whatnot, and I kept it closed, and I didn't like anybody to look in there. I suppose all children have those little corners where they can feel master of the situation. (Interview October 31, 1970)

None of the friezes done for the little cabinet have survived. However, five friezes, done for Charlot's room, of *savate* and English boxers in continuous, repeating patterns have been preserved: (1) fat boxer kicking to stomach, 4-1/2" long, fragment; (2) nose bleed, 38-3/4" long; (3) punch to nose, 17" long; (4) black boxer, 17-1/2" long; (5) kick to nose, 19-1/2" long; all are 2-3/4" wide. The friezes are undated, but Charlot provided some information and guesses in the early 1970s:

I was obviously boxing, but I started so early that it doesn't give us a date.

Must be earlier than 1912. That's extremely late limit.

Done for room. Frieze on dado. About 4' off the ground.

Must be early because my championship was 1913, and I would have done something different if I'd already been champion.

About 10 years old. ("Jean Charlot's Remarks on his Early French Art")

In fact Charlot won his scholastic championship on June 9, 1912, when he was fourteen years old. On stylistic grounds, I would guess that the date of the friezes is late 1911. Charlot commented on the salient feature of the friezes:

Idea of repeat. Composition for that.

Same idea treated differently for woven stuff for liturgical garments.

Probably from *Bing* Japanese stencils that suggested idea of repeats. Bing was there all my life.

"had idea of plumb for standing and diagonals for motion."

Charlot draws a parallel between the repeats used in the friezes and his designs for vestments during his liturgical period. His statement on verticals and diagonals, which I copied verbatim, is important for all his childhood art.

The friezes are among his funniest and most successful childhood works. The line is very sure; the use of the two colors (black and red, traditional for boxing trunks and so used in two of the friezes) is varied and witty; and the compositions are very accomplished. The friezes are very architectural with lined borders at top and bottom; the repeating patterns realize perfectly the frieze form, carrying the eye swiftly along the illustrated strip. An adult artist could have been proud of such an achievement.

Charlot drew the outlines of the forms first in pencil and then went over the lines in ink. Once he learned a figure sufficiently, he could omit parts or all of the pencil work. One raised foot in (4) has

not been inked. The ruling of the original paper helped keep the proportions of the pattern; any irregularities in the patterns result from the fact that it was all done freehand, not by tracing.

The compositions can be studied with profit. In 1, the leg of the kicker and the arms of the kicked provide horizontals; the kick pushes the kicked into the representation of the side of an oval that is popped out of place by the force of the blow. In 2, the shape of the flowing blood corresponds to the bulging shoulders of the strong man. In 3, the vignettes overlap in image and design: the two boxers form a parallelogram, but when the viewer concentrates on two images of the punched boxer, an incomplete pyramid becomes visible. The arms of the punched boxer are thrown out behind him by the force of the blow; his horizontal right hand overlaps the next image of the puncher, and his left arm is on the same diagonal as the body of his opponent. In 4, the strong symmetry of the black boxer leaning over from both sides contrasts with the chaotic shape of the loser between them. In 5, swinging horizontals and diagonals express the movement of the action. The lines suggest X-shapes within an implied framing rectangle, and interior squares are expressed in lines.

The careful compositions make a lively, not an academic, impression. Indeed, the drawings are genuinely funny, creating an effect of quickness and flash by concentrating on salient features and omitting superfluous details. The figures are very successful caricatures; in fact, Charlot will use his caricature of the strong man from 2 in his later religious cartoons. The drawings draw some inspiration, I believe, from an artist Charlot admired from his early childhood, the great French cartoonist and master of the witty line, Caran d'Ache. In fact, his *Album Caran d'Ache: Album Deuxième* (n.d.: 50 f.) portrays a savate boxer making similarly exaggerated gestures. The conventional stereotype of a black man is also used (16–19) as a caricature, but he is the winner. With his bald head and bulging build, he resembles the great African-American champion Jack Johnson.

3.4.7. PRINTMAKING

Starting in 1916, Charlot would become a prolific printmaker, but the beginnings of his interest and activity can be found in the earliest part of his life. Although it is not listed in Peter Morse's *Jean Charlot's Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné*, Charlot's first print is really his first bookplate: his "artistic" signature—with the initial *J* inside the *C* of his last name—directly carved in relief onto a square rubber stamp. He printed this either directly on the endpapers or on a little piece of paper that he then pasted into the book. He added in pencil the date of purchase of the book; these dates range from 1912 to 1914. The creation of the stamp can therefore be dated to 1912. All Charlot's bookplates reflect his interest in lettering, found already in *Juvenilia 1904*, and anticipate his later achievements, for instance, the serigraph covers of his catalogue of books, portfolios, writings, and murals (1975; Morse numbers 707, 708) and of his serigraph portfolio *Fiji* (1978; Morse number 754).

Although Charlot produced only one print during this early period, he was already fascinated by the medium. He traced the complicated technique of the lithographs in *Picture Book* (1933) to a childhood experience:

When I was very young, perhaps ten years old, I was in Poissy... We had a neighbor who had been involved with four-color mechanical reproduction. He would bring over color prints, as souvenirs of his past, and show us children the progressives: yellow, red, blue and black on top... Though I didn't think of it consciously when doing the *Picture Book*, it was a first visual experience with color separations. (Morse 1976: 88)

Similarly, he was impressed by the color reproductions his mother and sister later brought back from their trip to Parma (Interview October 31, 1970). Charlot in fact disliked the conventional differentiation of original from process prints (Morse 1976: xviii). Charlot also was given his first *Images d'Epinal*, which he later collected in quantity and which influenced his own printmaking. When I asked him about the beginnings of his interest in those great folk prints, he replied:

Well, it goes back, certainly, far away, I would say to the original Images d'Epinal, not the earlier ones, of course, but when I was a small child in the early 1900s, there were still those loose sheets that were printed at Epinal of Images d'Epinal. They were not what we think of now with a definite primitive stamp and so on, but they were usually short stories very much like the funnies that we find today in American newspapers, not in style, but in the machinery—that is, a series of tableaux of different moments of a certain action—and that I received from my grandfather mostly, I would say. He would just buy them at the shop, give them to me, and I enjoyed looking at the stories. And together with the stories, I absorbed the pictures. And even though they were not any more woodcuts, there was still a certain degree of simplification in the drawing, and the printing was still at times the stencils that were colored by hand, which gave them a certain flag-like decision about strong colors—glue tempera, red and blue, and so on. And another thing that I think interested me at the time: that the superposition of line and color was never quite exact. There was always a wobbly quality between color areas and line. Now, of course, I didn't look at them mostly from that technical point of view, but I know that that attracted my eye. (Interview October 22, 1970)

The influence of Epinal can be traced throughout his life. For instance, in 1955, he created the poster *Star of the Sea Carnival*:

I think it was the last thing I did along the lines of my Images d'Epinal idea: hand-coloring the print and multiplying the picture for popular consumption. It is very close in spirit to folk prints, though not technically so.¹²⁶

3.4.8. KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF ART

Charlot was a visual omnivore living in a world awash with natural and artistic sights. He encountered an unusual quantity and variety of art in his extended family and among their friends, and he was living in one of the world centers of the arts with its wealth of churches, museums, libraries, and

galleries of which he took full advantage. From his earliest childhood, he began developing an extraordinarily broad knowledge of the history of world art and literature.

Since I was a small boy I kind of mixed up a sort of scholarship- scholar approach I would say-to an artist's approach. I really have worshipped, visually anyhow, the old masters, and I was always interested in the storytelling in their work. (Lesley and Hollis 1961)

He used this knowledge as a scholar and also as an artist, who assimilates influences into his own creative processes. As a result, Charlot cannot be understood simply from a small number of influences, and conversely, the deliberate choices of influence he does make—such as Paolo Uccello—are revealing.

An artist who starts as young as Charlot does not approach art with acquired cultural and historical categories. When I asked him about “things that struck you as you first began to draw and paint,” he answered: “Well, I don't think they are artistic things, but that realization that you could put things and people on paper astonished me” (Interview September 14, 1970). The child enters a whole world of natural sights and created images. General impressions and vague amalgamations are more basic than specific art traditions, among which the child can choose with a fine indiscrimination.

In this section, I will discuss the surviving evidence of Charlot's specific knowledge and use of art. The picture is necessarily incomplete. Indeed a number of art traditions that impressed him have left little trace in his surviving work. He was deeply moved by the Egyptian art in the Louvre, but only one drawing in *Juvenilia 1904* can be traced back to it (03c recto).

Charlot was studying Medieval art with some intensity: “I had a good knowledge of the Middle Ages, of the art of the Middle Ages.”¹²⁷ Charlot used those studies in this period of his life only for his illuminations of Moreau's *Contes à ma Sœur*, but he was certainly following his characteristic method of storing up images and impressions that could be used later, for instance, in his 1916–1917 print *Skeleton* (Morse number 2). Besides the major Christian themes, Charlot could see on the walls of Notre-Dame Cathedral virtues and vices and even a *cargador* ‘burden bearer.’ La Gilde Notre-Dame, the liturgical art society that Charlot joined later, was imbued with the Medieval ideal of the anonymous artist communicating an important message clearly to the public. Charlot felt very much at home with Medieval art and discussed it often in conversation. Like his interest in Italian Primitives, Charlot's study of the Middle Ages was part of his interest in Christian periods of culture.

Brenner writes that Charlot asserted his Parisian background “by studying minutely Greek vases; by composing rigidly classic quatrains” (Idols 1929: 303). Vases are found in *Sketchbook 1905 (1907)* (26) and in *Cutouts 1907* (13, 14). If Brenner's “rigidly classic quatrains” refer to Charlot's Parnassian and Decadent poems, the period of his intense study of Greek art could be dated from 1911 to 1913. An undated copy, *Coupees de Cyrène. Perrot T. IX, Zeus et l'Aigle, Coupe du Louvre. trait incisé*, may belong to this period, although it could be later.¹²⁸ The early sixth century Laconian cup by the Naucratis Painter is in the Louvre, although Charlot's reference to Perrot might indicate that he was working from an illustration. The subject of the cup is even earlier than the depiction itself; “The armless Zeus with his

eagle is odd...and might reflect the form of a primitive statue” (Boardman 1998: 187). Charlot was characteristically drawn to the Archaic Period, or the Greek Primitives, so to speak. The technique is the one he was using at this time: ink and wash are laid over pencil. The image seems very true to early Classical art, and the black and purple are elegant. The eagle flying into the statue’s face reminds me of the rescuing angel in Charlot’s depictions of the Sacrifice of Isaac, perhaps an unconscious reminiscence.

Charlot recognized Greek art as a basis of the Classical tradition and always discussed it most interestingly. I remember particularly his art history lecture on Praxiteles’ *Hermes and Dionysius* (ca. 340 B.C.), which he accepted as the original sculpture: the unpolished surface was not damaged by time, but was a novel depiction of the atmosphere between the viewer and the statue. Charlot would use classical subjects when appropriate. For instance, his 1942 mural *Visual Arts, Drama, Music* is on the antebellum façade of the Fine Arts Building at the University of Georgia at Athens. A classical subject could be used as a symbol for an abstraction—as in *Time Discloseth All Things* (1944) in the Journalism Building of the same university—or for the basis of culture—as in *The Art Contribution to Civilization of All Nations and Countries* (1934) at the Straubenmüller Textile High School for the Humanities (now the Bayard Rustin School) in New York City.¹²⁹

In Charlot’s training as a classical artist, both informally and later at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, the drawing of the human body was the basis of esthetic education. Charlot was grateful for that education, and the human body remained for him the subject on which style could be studied and developed. That is, Greek art, especially its view of the body, remained a basis of comparison for Charlot in assessing the art of other cultures as well as his own (John Charlot 1983: 216 ff.). Greek art represented a fundamental physicality (Interview October 1, 1970): “it may very well be that my contact as an infant with my nurse’s breast gave me a certain idea of sensuousness, a certain entrance into a knowledge of Greek art, for example...” On the other hand, Charlot once told me that many people felt in Classical art a sadness, “an overtone of melancholy” (Interview September 17, 1970), because of the Greeks’ lack of belief in a Christian afterlife. In the early 1950s, he explained to me the meaning of the inscription in Poussin’s painting, *“Et in Arcadia Ego”*: even in the idyllic life, death was present. Around the same time, he explained to me the Greek commonplace, “Call no man blessed until he is dead.”¹³⁰

The reverse side of a glorification of the body was an inability to assimilate death, as Mexican Indians and Christians were able to do so well in their own art:

To sum up: Classical art put together for our prideful contemplation a god-like body, beautiful, immortal.

Both medieval and Romantic art said, “Correction, please,” and underlined instead suffering and death. (October 26, 1966)

Consequently, Charlot often used Greek art as an antithesis. When in the mid-1920s, he was exploring a Mexican style, he studied the nude body of his Aztec model Luz Jiménez in a series of line drawings. He was proud that those drawings revealed no trace of the Greek esthetic. Similarly, his pictures of Hawaiian bodies betray none of the lingering Classicizing that distorts the perception of

Western artists from the first explorers to the present day. Moreover, he could move from using the human body as the main means of expression, as in Western and Mexican art, to placing that body in the landscape in order to articulate an authentic Hawaiian view. Charlot understood Greek art so well that he could free himself from it, an essential characteristic of his multicultural career.

The most personal lesson Charlot learned from Classical art accorded with his general view of life. When I asked him about literary influences on his view of poverty, he replied:

Well, it's probably a little bit of all kinds of things, but there is a certain sense of the classical, strange to say, that maybe is as good an explanation as the religious one of the role of the poor as being another Christ, and so on and so forth, and that is a man with a minimum of accessories is at his most human...And if I paint a Nativity, I think it's very much for that idea of poverty, not seen as a virtue or not seen as a historical event, but where the minimum of complicated or the lack of complicated accessories and the simplicity of the things surrounding the Child and the Mother and Joseph makes them more truly human and as such, for me at least, truly classical. Of course, that doesn't mean that I do people like the Greeks have, that is, just naked as being the most human. That isn't quite it, because man isn't made for that. Man nude is in a way as artificial as a man in all the falbalas or frills of the court of Louis XV. But the simplicity in the attire and a humanity. (Interview September 21, 1970)

Greek references occur more often in Charlot's poems of the period, but they are conventional for the time, and even the subject of humor as in a fragment of a poem probably written in 1914:

l'Immortalité
trompette, hors d'haleine
"J'ai ressuscité
l'Idéal hellène."

'Immortality
trumpets, out of breath,
"I've resuscitated
the Hellenic ideal.'"

However, Charlot's wide reading in Greek literature in translation is demonstrated by his occasional abstruse references. Indeed, I believe one passage in his later writings is based on an unconscious memory. In the play *Moa a Moi*, the Hawaiian chief 'Umi must confront a shark god (*Three Plays* 1963: 254):

I know what to do with rebellious chiefs. But can one speak of a rebellious god? One thing is sure: in such a new kind of war earthly champions and weapons shall prove to be out of place.

The passage corresponds to the *Odyssey* XII 116–120, 226–259: the explicit vanity of Odysseus' weapons against the demon Scylla.¹³¹ Charlot explained to me references also from Latin literature, like Aeneas carrying his father Anchises, an example of filial piety portrayed by Raphael. Charlot's broad knowledge

spared him the vapid clichés about Greece and Rome, and he could defend the violent subjects of Posada by reminding squeamish viewers of their favorable engagement:

con el incesto de Oedipus, con el hambre de Ugolino, con las witches de Shakespeare o el Quasimodo de Hugo. (Charlot August 30, 1925)

‘with the incest of Oedipus, with the starvation of Ugolino, with the witches of Shakespeare or Hugo’s Quasimodo.’

Classical literature clearly made an impression on Charlot as it often does on those who study it when young. His thinking regularly revealed a tragic undercurrent. In the section *La Tragédie* of his 1923 *Psychoplastie*, the reader is advised to flee the illusion of comedy for the realism of tragedy. In 1948, I sat by my father as we watched the newly released *Hamlet* of Laurence Olivier. As Hamlet lay dying, I said to my father, “He can’t die. He’s the hero.” My father answered, “This is tragedy.” “What’s that?” I asked. “It’s closer to real life,” he said. Two days before he died, he referred to the possible loss of his eyesight as a “tragedy.”

As seen in the above discussion of *Juvenilia 1904*, Charlot drew equally on Western and Asian art. Western art was represented by the mass of art in his world, from high to folk, from originals to copies and process prints. East Asian art was represented by original works in the family’s collection and by excellent reproductions in books. The common denominator of the works that had an impact on Charlot was graphic strength, which became a noted virtue of his own. Graphic works were capable of creating an immediate impression, “d’emblée,” which Charlot prized and practiced. Charlot was working primarily in pencil, and he was probably attracted to drawings and monochrome paintings. From their library, Charlot’s parents were able to provide him with excellent reproductions of Japanese masters, especially Hokusai, whom Charlot took to immediately and studied the rest of his life. When he later saw the Utamaro prints in the Camondo collection in the Louvre, they “intrigued me very much indeed, perhaps more, even, than Monet and Van Gogh” (Interview October 31, 1970). From the evidence of *Juvenilia 1904*, discussed above, Japanese art provided Charlot with examples of strong images done primarily in line and placed effectively on the page. Moreover, he began early to emphasize different brushstrokes—a difference from Western classical finish—a practice apparent in his later paintings and ink cartoons. He described a Maya work in Japanese terms:

The line is elegant, tapering from broad to narrow by imperceptible nuances. This, and the boldness of the curves shows that the brushes must have been of carefully chosen long hairs pointed when wet as a Japanese watercolor brush.
the brushes must have been of carefully chosen long hairs pointed when wet as a Japanese water-color brush.¹³²

Indeed Charlot’s first impression of Mexican Indians was “terre cuite et masques japonais” ‘baked clay and Japanese masks’ (“Première Arrivée au Mexique,” January 20, 1921).

Charlot directly imitated East Asian art in a pair of screens, of which three of four panels survive, and which I date on stylistic grounds circa 1908–1909.¹³³ Charlot used an unusually heavy paper

that could stand on its edge when folded in the middle; one complete sheet survives along with one half of a second sheet. At times, Charlot started with preparatory lines in pencil and then covered them with brushstrokes; at others, he seems to have applied his brush freely to the paper. In both cases, the strokes vary in the amount of ink used, and he is clearly reproducing the brushstrokes he has studied in East Asian art. Similarly, the leaves, especially the successful bamboo, are based on East Asian models, as is the unusual amount of reserved space and the point of view from a high angle. Charlot created a seal-like signature or cachet, consisting of a vertical rectangle enclosing his initials and placed it on each of the panels; he would continue to use this signature occasionally in less Orientalizing works.

Charlot's drawings, however, probably contain more objects than his models, and he seems to have taken his animals from both books on Japanese art (the weasels seen from a high angle) and illustrations of La Fontaine (the cat pawing towards the bird in the tree). He reveals a Westerner's interest in three-dimensional form: in the modeling of the large black duck, he uses interior strokes to define the direction of the feathers and the impressive bulk of the bird. Similarly, some of his figures are designed to penetrate into space, like his rabbits and overlapping leaves. The panels are related to Charlot's earlier work. His childhood drawings of plants growing from the ground are the background for his Orientalizing blades of grass, probably the most original brushstroke in the panels: individual strokes of a loaded brush start at the top and come to a pointed finish at the bottom or the ground. In the panel of black and white ducks, concentric ripples are placed under a swimming duck, a device from Charlot's very early childhood and antithetic to the adopted style. Similarly, a distant pine tree looks more like his drawings for Russian folktales. In fact, Charlot cannot resist storytelling in his panel with cat, birds, and rabbits. Even when deliberately imitating Asian art, Charlot's artistic personality cannot be suppressed.

Charlot's later articles on the Chinese artist Tseng Yu-ho, Betty Ecke, show that he continued to study East Asian art throughout his life, appreciating always its popular printmaking, its varied brushwork, and its explorations of the relationships between tone and color. He also used Chinese art theory to describe the process of art.

Books illustrated by Western artists were equally important. In his early childhood, Charlot was much taken with the work of Rodolphe Töppfer (1799–1846), the Swiss inventor of the comic book, who had already influenced Toulouse-Lautrec and delighted such literary giants as Goethe and Tolstoy (Wiese 1965: ix f.). Töppfer's comics, done entirely in a wonderfully lively line, contain sequences, both with and without words, that still move the reader to laughter. Charlot is known to have read *Histoire de Mr Pensil*, because he bought a reprint (1923) and showed it to his children (Martin was particularly enthusiastic). In all likelihood he knew other books as well. Töppfer's work appealed clearly to Charlot's interest in narrative art and in the combination of words and images. Moreover, in *Histoire de Mr Pensil* can be found such elements of Charlot's childhood art as wind compositions (page 3), the *M* formula for birds, semaphores (e.g., 25), and a burden bearer.¹³⁴ *Juvenilia* also contains a comic strip sequence drawn by an older hand that Charlot copied on the verso (73c recto and verso). Töppfer provides an indirect description of his own work in his *Essay on Physiognomy* (1845; Wiese 1965). "Literature in pictures" or the "picture story" has the advantages of being able to provide many details and yet be concise; like an effective debater, it "goes straight to the point." It has an impact on people, moves them, emerges from

intuition, and possesses “extreme clarity.” It appeals “mainly to children and the lower classes” and is an effective device for teaching moral lessons (3 f.). The use of line especially contributes to clarity and legibility for a wide audience. Line also permits “complete freedom”; indeed, the English do such work better than the French, who are “too constrained” by ideas of correctness (6–9). Charlot is not known to have read the *Essay on Physiognomy*, but he could have recognized its list of virtues in their admirable embodiment in Töppfer’s own drawings. He would make those virtues his own.

Charlot was enthusiastic also about the work of Caran d’Ache (pseudonym of Emmanuel Poiré, 1859–1909), whose cartoon sequences combined a delicious humor with an ultra-precise line. The two albums that survive from the Charlots’ family library (Caran d’Ache, n.d. [I] and [II]) offer many examples of visual storytelling that would have delighted the young Charlot, such as a hunter with his gun (I 10 f.), a horse in all sorts of odd postures giving an idea of ridiculous movement (I 16 f.), and the use of the geometry of a fan to suggest motion (II 12). A sequence of a young author embarrassed by an older one and his butler (II 32–36) recalls Charlot’s later encounter with Cocteau’s butler. A “modern” artist paints with his fingers (II 27–29), just as Charlot did in later life. *Juvenilia 1904* (38a recto) may be based on Caran d’Ache (I 12).

The first Images d’Epinal that Charlot knew were also comic strips (Interview October 22, 1970). Charlot never lost his childhood love of the genre. In the United States, he was drawn to them because of two of his major interests: “cartoons were one of the forms, of course, of storytelling, was one of the forms with balloons and so on where the words and the art were together” (Interview September 15, 1970). He contacted a number of prominent cartoonists, especially George Herriman (1881–1944), the author of *Krazy Kat*, whom Charlot rated a genius. Charlot was interested in the wide popularity of cartoons in the United States and considered them an example of America’s “intense forms of folk art” (same interview). The influence of cartoons and comic strips can be seen in his own work, from his childhood funny drawings, to his visual satires with dialog at the beginning of World War I, through his long career as a cartoonist for American Roman Catholic publications.

The Charlot family had a large number of illustrated books in its library, and the young Charlot must have gone through them with much interest. The book that had the strongest visible impact on him was George Sand’s *Histoire du Vêritable Gribouille* (1851) with its strange illustrations by Maurice Sand. I have already mentioned the direct quotation from the book in *Juvenilia 1904* (80b verso, 95a verso; Sand 1851: 116) and described how one of its illustrations arose from Charlot’s unconscious as a disturbing image at the time of his father’s terminal illness. Other images that find echoes in *Juvenilia* are two servants with insect heads in butler uniforms (26), beings with human bodies and animal heads (88), plants (73), and insects throughout. Other images can be related to Charlot’s later work: a simple scape of sea and sky (67) to his puppet decor, an insect knight (118) to his cutouts, and a hanged man and little rats (111, 114) to his illuminations of Moreau’s *Contes à ma Sœur*. Turkish costumes (51) are among the many Orientalizing images Charlot would have found in other books from the family library and that he used extensively in his early work, from *Juvenilia 1904* to his illuminations of Régnier’s *Le Miroir des Heures*.

One of the few such that survive is *Les Mille et Une Nuits: Contes Arabes*,¹³⁵ and it is full of storytelling, exotic scenes, garden fountains, camels, dromedaries, boats, long-tailed birds, and swordsmen. Half-human, half-winged demons face each other (III 83, 104, 130, 142, 153), and flying men attack a town (II 467; III 174), although the image is not as proximate as Maurice Sand's. Distant similarities can be found to Charlot's later compositions of *Chalma Pilgrimage* (81) and *Pastoras* (157).

Illustrations of the Fables of La Fontaine in the family library provided numerous animal pictures. In Décembre Alonnier's *Fables de J. de la Fontaine* (1887) can be found an elephant with a platform and riders (238) along with a variety of animals engaged in strange activities, such as a monkey riding a classical dolphin (120). An illustration of rats on a dining room table in a setting with pots and heavy curtains seems directly related to Charlot's illuminations for *Contes à ma Sœur*; other pictures of rats are suggestive (118, 191, 369). Gustave Doré's edition—for whose work Charlot always had a certain appreciation—also provided illustrations that must have been fascinating for a child.¹³⁶ A number are echoed in Charlot's own work: rats on a table with rich brocade and glistening plate (31; also, 746, 768); a romantic graveyard scene (385); skeleton death takes a dying man away (461); contrast between a worker and a rich man (464 f.; also, 662 f., "Le Berger et le Roi"); and numerous interesting vignettes. Other sources for animal pictures were available. For instance, Odette noted that a postcard of a male clothed frog and a female clothed mouse, "Nr. 420 M. M. Vienne. M. Munk," belonged to Charlot. Charnay's *A Travers les Forêts Vierges* (1891) contained a great picture of a giant alligator or crocodile (139) and an illustrated description of an invasion of ants like the one Charlot later experienced in Yucatán (169 ff.).

Charlot undoubtedly knew other books for children. His copy of Heinrich Hoffmann's *Der Struwwelpeter oder lustige Geschichten und drollige Bilder* (n.d.)—whose illustrations have frightened German children for generations—was bought later in New York City, but, in view of Henri's knowledge of Germany, Charlot likely knew it as a child.

In the family's books on freemasonry, Charlot could have studied the use of geometric forms as symbols as well as narrative art, Egyptian figures with animal heads, exotic costumes and architecture, and witches riding flying animals.¹³⁷ Travel books, like his father's copy of Armand Silvestre's *La Russie: Impressions, Portraits, Paysages* (1892), provided images of other cultures.¹³⁸ Charlot found materials outside the home. He purchased Victor Hugo's *Les Orientales* "with a lovely engraving, a very romantic engraving, of a harem girl looking at the moon." Charlot recognized how much he had learned from his book collecting:

I think that my own taste in lithography and what could be done with lithography comes in fine part from looking at those early editions... It was a great education, not only for what I got out of it in *buying* books, but looking at those many things and many books and getting an idea of nineteenth-century literature in sort of a very vivid fashion.¹³⁹

In 1912, Charlot created his first bookplate, a facsimile of his artistic signature, which shows that he had started to form his private library. He had begun to buy books from the used-book stands along

the quais of the Seine and at the Marché aux Puces, the flea-market, a practice he would expand over the next years. A note in the first volume of a series bought in 1914 states: “quais 15 frs les 8 pas complet” ‘quais 15 francs for the 8 not complete’ (*Théâtre de P. Corneille, avec les commentaires de Voltaire* 1797). Charlot noted on the ex libris the date of the purchase of the books; they range from 1912 to 1914. He also wrote “de M.” ‘from M.’ on two, which indicates that he was receiving gifts for his library as well. He apparently experienced at least once the classic triumph of a book collector: finding an undervalued gem. In his copy of Amyot’s *Deux Vies Parallèles* (n.d.), he inserted a small piece of paper on which he stamped his ex libris and wrote “1914 Les 9 d’1 coup. Quelle gaffe !” ‘1914 The nine at one blow. What a blunder!’ Sometime before 1917, Charlot wrote a technical bibliographical note about his copy of Hugo’s *Les Orientales* (1829), which had “a very fine romantic binding.” In later life, although too poor to purchase many books and transport them on his travels, Charlot did find and cling to a number of rare items. More established in Hawai’i, he kept a sharp eye out for interesting purchases. I remember his happiness at finding Joseph Bédier’s *La Chanson de Roland* at a Hawai’i library sale. “It doesn’t look like much,” he told me, “but it’s a classic edition of the work.” In fact, Charlot was able to buy a number of books, such as the *Atlas* of the Goupil Collection, that he had known as a child but that had been lost over the years. He even amused himself with the idea of making a complete collection of Ellery Queen (Tabletalk July 14, 1976). When the bulk of Charlot’s collection was donated to the University of Hawai’i after his death, 75 percent of the books were new to the Hamilton Library, and 25 percent were not listed on OCLC, the national listing of all books ever published. Charlot could find a certain distance from what for many people is an obsessive hobby; his third bookplate taunts his collector’s desire for possession: “Jean Charlot me crut sien. p.p.l.” ‘Jean Charlot thought me his. Pray for him.’

In France, Charlot collected a number of books that he really wanted, like editions of the poets.¹⁴⁰ He used Théodore de Banville *Petit Traité de Poésie Française* (1891) extensively for his own poetry, and the bookplate with the date 1912 provides a valuable datum. He was very proud of his leather-bound edition of Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac* (1676)¹⁴¹—“the letters of Cyrano de Bergerac, the original edition” (Interview October 22, 1970)—an author whose work he loved. He had the binding restored in Hawai’i so that it could be passed down in the family. He particularly regretted the loss of a complete, possibly second edition of Molière and the first, small book on Cézanne, “Very precious.” Many books, however, were bought as collector’s items or for their bindings and illustrations, like an edition of the playwright Edmond Rostand. Some of these are poor, like the Rostand, as Charlot later recognized, and the half-leather bindings of the modern series of classic texts published by *La Renaissance du Livre*. Charlot also collected books with textured and colored papier-mâché covers, often illustrated on the cover and in the text and with occasional gilding. He remembered:

It’s a papier-mâché that was molded. It was the style of the time, and if they had been in what people call mint condition, they would have been collector’s items. But of course those I got, I got them because they were *not* in mint condition and I could

afford them. I think there was at the time a sort of a vague idea that I would collect such things, but it didn't quite jell. (Interview October 22, 1970)

The surviving examples were published between 1847 and 1861, and all, except a volume of Buffon, are from series designed for Roman Catholic children. Charlot did not put a bookplate in them, and I found no sign that he read them. They look like the sort of pseudo-impressive book a child would collect. Nonetheless, Charlot had some affection for them. Once, when unable to take them on one of his moves, he removed and packed most of the covers rather than throw the whole books away.

Charlot was also early acquainted with various genres of easel paintings and sculpture such as portraits, still lifes, animalier works, flower subjects, landscapes, garden scenes, and so on; several occur from his earliest dated work, the sheet of 1900. The Louvre provided the experience of larger and greater works, which he first visited with his elders and, when old enough, on his own (Interview September 9, 1970): "I used to go every weekend to the Louvre and soak in the Old Masters." The Western art that most impressed Charlot on his first visits was apparently the grand French *machines*, the mural-scale classical compositions of historical subjects, prominently displayed and fascinating for their size and narrative. In *Juvenilia* 1904 can be found his own versions of battles, cavalry charges, and encounters of officers. The great paintings of Poussin, David, and Ingres continued to be an inspiration throughout his life, and he placed his own work firmly in the line of their tradition: "it was one of my desires, certainly, to do that, to do complex things that would be as complex as those of the classical masters" (Interview November 18, 1970). When I returned from France in 1955, he asked me what had most impressed me at the Louvre and was delighted when I confessed that, to my surprise, it had been the *machines*. Charlot connected Poussin closely to his own background:

Poussin is a very curious fellow, because he cannot be exported, and all non-French people who have spoken about Poussin have spoken of him trying to put themselves in the skin, so to speak, of a Frenchman and have not quite realized what he can mean, let's say, to a *Parisian*, a fellow born and raised in Paris. His things are not extraordinary in a way. That is, for example, he hides to a great extent his brushstroke. If he gets a little excited and gets a little bit romantic in the drapes, he will cool it off instead of warming it up, and yet is perhaps, if I had to choose any one man among the old masters as an influence, the one that certainly would be my choice. (March 8, 1972)

In an unpublished blurb for Peter Morse's catalogue raisonné of his prints, Charlot wrote:

the Italian Paolo Uccello taught him how geometry is the very marrow of art, a lesson that was to serve him well throughout his mural career. Poussin and Cézanne both exemplified the French flair for clarity that, later on, as he came under the spell of non-classical cultures, helped him retain his balance.

I think my own surface arrangements and diagrams come rather from the Italians. Well, Poussin always, but the Italians, Piero della Francesca, Uccello, are probably

my greatest models for surface geometric construction. (Interview November 12, 1970)

Charlot's special, personal interest in Italian art emerged later when he explored the marginal site in which the Primitives and early Renaissance artists were shown:

It was rather difficult to find the things I liked, because they were not fashionable. I was not looking for them, but from the great big rooms, I would go into the smaller rooms, and at the time, that is long ago, there was a room that was a cul-de-sac...It was literally a dead-end. And in that dead-end was Fra Angelico's *The Coronation of the Virgin*, and on the side, there was the Paolo Uccello of the battle...I looked at those Italian Primitives, and I learned from them, I would say, more than I did from any live teacher.¹⁴²

He remembered that he was "maybe 12 years old or so" when he first saw the work of Paolo Uccello (Interview September 14, 1970), who would be so important in his development.

In the Louvre I dreamt long and deep before the battle piece of Uccello, tucked away by curators—who far preferred Carlo Dolci—the small room where Italian primitives were sidetracked. (*MMR* 180)

He characteristically preferred a narrative Italian. He was also drawn to the more geometric composers:

Much as I like Italian art, I do not feel a tremendous affinity for what is called in general Italian art with the sensuousness of the color and a certain Baroque quality in the drawing. But certain of the minds of the Italian artists, a man like Paolo Uccello for example, Piero Della Francesca, and of course the earlier great fresco painters, men like Giotto, are very much at the core of what I know about art. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Of course, Charlot was acquainted with much more Italian art than displays itself in his childhood work. For instance, he penciled in a copy of a Pisanello medallion to illustrate the poetic mention of one in Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures* (203). However, Charlot always preferred the French tradition because of its greater interest in the subject matter; he felt that the Italians, for all their greatness, tended to sacrifice the subject to geometry. I noted from a conversation of the early 1970s his remark that Uccello "is so cold-blooded that he uses a corpse in the battle scene as a perspective line, as much as the lances" (Tabletalk).

The great Western tradition as a whole was known, loved, and used by Charlot, and he would return always in his thinking to the Old Masters as a foundation. When I asked him which artists were particularly helpful to him in expressing his experiences in World War I, he replied (September 21, 1970): "I always have to go back to the Old Masters because, as I said before, they were closer to me than any of the contemporaries." Even when some of the contemporary art he studied at the time faded over the years, the Old Masters remained as valuable as ever:

Of course, perhaps, thinking of the contemporary art of my time, again let's say around 1910, certain things have caved in a little bit, but I really was much closer, I think I said that already, before, much more intimate with the art of the Old Masters of the past centuries, and that, if anything, has gone better, maybe because I have grown up a little bit in the craft of painting, and just in my own life I can go perhaps a little deeper in appreciating the Old Masters, especially the things the people did in their old age. (Interview September 19, 1970)

that feeling of pertaining to the ancient times, of being at ease in ancient centuries. And I had the same feeling in the Louvre a little later on still because I have never been able to think in terms of time past and time the present and time the future and because of the quality of certain artisans and artists, maybe the people who sculptured the stones in Poissy; and to go back to Poussin or the room of the primitives in the Louvre with men like Paolo Uccello and Giotto and so on. I was really much closer to these men than to many people that were alive, artists that I met in my lifetime. I think I still am the same; I still am a little confused about who is alive and who is dead in art, and it is not a question of being above the ground or under the ground. (Interview September 15, 1970)

When I asked Charlot about Spanish art, he replied:

Well, you absorb, of course, much of Spanish art in its provincial form in Mexican art, but my first contact with the non-French forms of European art was with El Greco. That was the fashionable rediscovery around 1910, and I followed suit, and of course in the Louvre at the time—and I don't know why they don't do that anymore—they featured the great *Crucifixion* that they have of El Greco against the stormy sky with the two supplicants at the bottom of the picture. That was in the Great Gallery, and it was at a right angle as you came in, so you could see it from all kinds of points of view, and it was a very beautiful picture. I like it very much. It seems to me a little tormented. I wasn't taken by the things that pleased so much Maurice Barrès. I enjoyed, though, the abstract forms of the night sky. And then there was another El Greco that I liked very much because it seemed to me so delicate, and that was a portrait supposedly of St. Louis, King of France. And I probably learned more from that *St. Louis, King of France*, than I did from the *Crucifixion* because it was one of those delicate El Grecos where he refines on his brushstroke, and the color of the skin as it goes into the darks becomes blue. It is gray in the light and gray-blue in the darks with an exquisite precision of the stroke. I am not too fond of El Greco when he gets excited. Maybe it reminded me too much of what we called Modern Art around 1920. But I love him when he polishes his work and can give the same sense of passion and excitement through means that are nearly timid. That is, when he creates his form rather than making a replica of something he has done before.¹⁴³

Charlot's first print with an image, *Head of Christ*, was based on "probably a Spanish sculpture" (Morse 1976: 3, number 1).

Charlot's childhood knowledge of Impressionism is hard to quantify and to date. As described above, the key Impressionist influence on his early development was seeing a painting by Boudin—by 1911 at the latest—which gave him "an idea, though I didn't have the label for it, of the painting of *plein air*, of sunlight, and Impressionism" (Interview October 31, 1970). From that point, he developed his own "Impressionist" works from observation and his own internal development. His knowledge of Impressionism was, however, extended by later acquaintance with a larger number of paintings, especially those in the Gustave Caillebotte collection at the Musée du Luxembourg—now at the Musée d'Orsay—and the Count Isaac de Camondo collection at the Louvre, donated respectively in 1896 and 1908. In the interview of October 31, 1970, he described visiting the collections:

as soon as the [Camondo collection] was exhibited in the Louvre, it was exhibited on the top floor, in the attic rooms of the Louvre, which are very low-ceilinged, because the Louvre people were a little ashamed somehow of exhibiting those things. There was a beautiful collection of Impressionists and even Post-Impressionists. I saw in the Camondo Collection my first Van Gogh picture, and my parents had mentioned that the man was quite mad, and of course I saw the madness in the picture, but also the impact of something that I hadn't so much noticed in the Impressionists because it's another thing, but that romantic quality of the impasto which is put on the canvas with bravura, like somebody somehow with a sword, with a *fleuret* in a duel, something like that, and I did feel that thing in there. I thought it was beautiful. I was not intrigued by it because my own approach to art, then and now, I think, has always been orderly and trying to efface rather than to underline the excitement of painting. I saw there, and I remember very well the things I saw, my first Monets, and Pissarros... Then there was another collection of Impressionists that I saw when I was a little boy, and that was the famous Legs Caillebotte. Caillebotte had left his pictures to the Louvre, and he had a fantastic collection. He was a friend of Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, and so on, and the Louvre had refused the *legs*, and then through the political go-between of Georges Clémenceau, who was a friend of Monet, the Louvre had accepted, I think, perhaps twenty pictures out of sixty, something like that.¹⁴⁴ They were not shown in the Louvre; they were shown in what was the museum of modern art, the Luxembourg, rather badly placed in a little side gallery. But there I did see my first Renoir, for example, which was a nude with some sun spots somehow on the flesh. And it astonished me very much to see that flesh that was spotted with blues to signify shadows and yellow to signify sunlight. I didn't think it was too successful from that point of view. It was intriguing. I saw there my first Cézannes, and they were somehow more mysterious for me than the Monet. And it was the beginning of a digging into that problem of Cézanne which for my generation was so important. So I had a knowledge of Impressionism, and I had a knowledge of what

the Impressionists saw in nature, especially through that looking at the skies and the reflections in the water, but I don't think that none [*sic*] of that became one of essentials, anyhow, of my art-making.

When I asked Charlot about his first impression of Cézanne, he replied:

Well, what I saw was, I would say, a casual Cézanne. It's a little road, and there was a wall on one side and a few trees. It's not a Cézanne that I would choose nowadays as the most important, but it wasn't the fault of Caillebotte because all his great Cézannes, including *The Bathers*, had been refused by the museum. But I was very intrigued by a way that Cézanne had had to represent that white wall, working it out with the palette knife, and with a sort of a really mason's attitude of troweling the paint on that particular wall. It looked exactly, I would say, like a wall. Not so much visually, perhaps, as in the textures, and that, again, interested me very much, and perhaps some of the troweling of the paint that I found in Cézanne then, and also in some of Courbet's pictures, is something that remained with me—and the relation—it sounds like a pun, but it isn't—of the wall of Cézanne and murals, probably something that oriented me towards mural painting, that is, painting on a wall.

A further exposure to aspects of Impressionism came from his art teachers:

I was soaked in the teachings of those people which were, we could say, just between Academism and Impressionism and very able at it. But it certainly opened my eyes to many problems which I was not really to go further into later on: of course, the problems of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in relation to outdoors and the sense of sunlight and so on, which are not things that I followed up very closely later on. (Interview September 14, 1970)

Although Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works were shown in galleries and even the Salons d'Automne in the years before the war (e.g., Altschuler 1994: 10, 14, 19, 23), their study was not as easy in Charlot's youth as it is today, and a number of works remained unknown to him. He said he had not known Bonnard's print *La Loge*, which he appreciated for its strength (Tabletalk January 13, 1979).

Similar problems of dating are faced in defining Charlot's early knowledge of Cubism. His concentrated study of Cubism and production of Cubist works occurred in the postwar period and thus belongs to a later chapter of his biography. But Charlot spent his early childhood in a world in which Cubism was the contemporary art (Interview May 18, 1971): "my generation. We were sort of born within Cubism and not the Cubism later on that was more decorative and colorful, but the Analytical Cubism of the beginnings." For Charlot, Cubism would always be a late chapter of Classicism:

I do like very much those problems [of mural composition]; they are very esoteric in a way, and in another way they allow people to look at things as if they were natural in situations that are impossible for normal vision. I was very interested in those things because I saw it in the Old Masters perhaps; perhaps the first time I got conscious of

those problems was looking at some of the early Cubist pictures. By Cubism I usually speak of the Cubist pictures done around 1910 or so, maybe just two or three years before, two or three years after, that sort of brown analytical Cubism which is really the only one I truly like. But of course, before Cubism, I had seen the Old Masters in the Louvre, and Cubism was using some of the same problems, semi-geometric problems used by the Old Masters. (September 17, 1970)

Cubism is only one example of a passage of time between Charlot's first acquaintance with an artist or school and his active focus on it. While at Condorcet, he would pass by an art gallery that was showing the work of the Douanier Rousseau—Henri-Julien-Félix Rousseau (1844–1910)—displaying different paintings in the window. Charlot was particularly impressed by Rousseau's self-portrait in his customs office uniform, *Myself, Portrait-Landscape*.¹⁴⁵ But it was only in America that he began to appreciate Rousseau as a genuine composer rather than as a Grandma Moses figure: he viewed a painting in which a number of compositional problems had been addressed and solved. From then on, he emphasized that aspect of Rousseau's work.

Charlot occasionally mentioned other artists; for instance, he saw Umberto Boccioni's Futurist marching man, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913), shortly before World War I (Tabletalk March 7, 1972). Charlot became acquainted with other fields as well, for instance, the architecture of the Perret brothers in which reinforced concrete was used apparently (Tabletalk April 1978). Unfortunately, a complete inventory of Charlot's early knowledge of Western art cannot be reconstructed at this time.

Charlot's early knowledge of Mexican art is better documented and makes itself felt in his *Cutouts 1907*, as noted above. As described in *Family Background*, Charlot was reared in a family and among friends who were intimately acquainted with Mexico and possessed important collections of Mexican Indian, folk, and fine art. He remembered very clearly being fascinated as a young child by the many Mexican folk miniatures of genre scenes, which he felt were an early influence on his own work. Louis Goupil's:

Paris apartment was crammed with mementos: two landscapes by Velasco, featuring the volcanoes; a squadron of Mexican dressed fleas; an army of wax figures, rehearsing the same simple plots that delighted me as a child and later recurred in my paintings: *tlachiqueros* sucking the sap out of magueys, *petate* weavers, trotting burden bearers, and the distaff activities of the Mexican kitchen, females kneading dough, patting tortillas, fanning coal fires. (MMR 179)

Charlot remembered looking at the tiny figures through the glass of a vitrine:

you have seen in my sister's little place some of the remnants of the figures and figurines that my grandfather had collected. Those were not Prehispanic things; they were folk art, but they were folk art of the mid-nineteenth century, which is pretty hard to get nowadays. And because I was little, I would look very intently, especially at the lower shelves. It was more difficult for adults than for me, and it was my own

little world at the level of my eyes. Quite a number of those representations are of Indians at their work, and those Indians at their work are the very same people that I found at their work when I went to Mexico and the very same people that I painted at their work with the same gestures that those wax figures were using. The most obvious things were the women working at their *metates* with their children on their back, wrapped in a *rebozo*. We have that in that collection; even now there are a few of those figures: the women walking on the way with a child or so wrapped in the *rebozo* at their back; the men getting the sap out of the maguey for the *agua*, milk, to make the *pulque*; and the *chinampas*—the flat boats, bringing the vegetables on the canals that at the time went right into the heart of Mexico, with the women dressed up in their village costumes. Nowadays I think it's only on certain occasions, and fiestas, and so on, but in those days each village had special costumes, just as it is today in Guatemala. And some of those women were dressed up actually in the same handwoven and hand-dyed costumes of the region of Milpa Alta where Luciana, Luz, who had been my model for all the Indian women that I painted, came from. And Luz herself was dressed up in that beautiful skirt, which is wrapped up in a rather elaborate way with folds, that is a very dark blue, indigo blue, with black lines at the bottom and at the top creamy white, and all the folds are gathered together into a handwoven and embroidered belt, which is a rather stiff belt of white and purple red. Now those colors before I saw them on her, before I saw them on her mother, and so on, when I visited the village, I had seen already in those miniature wax figures. And the way the folds folded, the way the arms in action worked, either giving the breast to the child or working with the stone, hand on the stone *metate* with the maize flour, I was ready for all that because I had seen it already in those little tableaux. There is a change of scale, I would say, from the child to the adult, that the child can see small things as big, and for me those little figures were really life-sized as I looked at them. So my eyes were really ready for the Mexico that I found. Of course, that was the Mexico of 1920, which, again, may be quite different from Mexico of today. But I think there was no jumping from one theme to another, but from the beginning up to now, the themes have enlarged around the same things: the very few costumes and accessories and the very few motions of the housework, for example, of the women, and that has been sufficient to guide really my whole art. Not so much perhaps as subject matter: as a general statement about—maybe not pleasant life—but good life as I understand it and summed up in the life of the Indians. (Interview September 28, 1970)

So, when I went to Mexico it was really a return rather than an arrival. I found there the things I had been looking for. It was extraordinary to see the people as I had imagined them come alive in the streets of Mexico City and even more so in Indian villages. (*Artists* 1974: 45)

In family photograph collections, Charlot saw images of Colonial and modern Mexico and its inhabitants in the city-scapes of Desiré Charnay and Julio Michaud as well as in photographs by Theobert Mahler and a number of anonymous photographers, some of them probably family members. The family owned Charnay's album of photographs, *Cités et ruines américaines*, or at least most of the photographs from it: Louis Goupil had worked as Charnay's assistant on the project. The family library contained books on post-contact Mexico, although none of these, apart from the volumes on the Goupil Collection, can be identified with certainty.¹⁴⁶ Books like Charnay's *Les Anciennes Villes du Nouveau Monde* (1885) contained numerous illustrations of Precolumbian art and architecture along with pictures of contemporary Mexico.¹⁴⁷ Family members would often discuss Mexico and tell stories about it:

Every weekend we would go and have dinner and a day with my grandfather Goupil, for example, and he is the man who was my closest tie to Mexico. Very often the archeologist Charnay would be there, telling further stories about Mexico. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Charlot also saw Precolumbian and early contact art in family collections, especially the remains of Eugène Goupil's:

Well, there were always some little things around, but the place that for me was the epitome of Aztec art on a very large scale was the country house, especially, of my Uncle Eugène. He had died, I think, before I was born, but his widow was the owner of the great house where the family, sometimes quite a number of people, would gather together and where were displayed some of the things that my uncle had not given either to the Trocadero Museum or to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Naturally he had kept some of the most spectacular things for himself. There was a very beautiful sixteenth century portrait of Moctezuma in full costume. It was done in the Western way, and it had great details of the robes of the emperor and the feather headdress of the emperor and very beautiful representation of the Aztec type in the face and in the hands and so on. I think, of course, not done from the emperor himself, but certainly done by a very good painter from a very good type that was as classical in its Aztec beauty as any Greek marble, shall we say, is classical of the Greek body... And all around, of course, there were some glass cases full of things that nowadays would be impossible to duplicate—hearth stones and masks and whatnot. So the sight, we could say, of Mexican antiquities as we call them now were for me more than antiquities. They were sort of a nearly landscaping of accessories around the tales told of my background two or three generations back. (Interview September 28, 1970)

Charlot did not remember what had become of the portrait.¹⁴⁸ Charlot could of course visit the donated collections at the Trocadero and would later make a study of the Goupil-Aubin Collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Charlot also studied the good plaster casts that Charnay had brought from Mexico (Tabletalk March 4, 1972).

After original materials, Charlot studied the family's books on ancient Mexico:

though [Louis Goupil] himself did not have a, I would say, an organized collection of Mexican antiquities as his brother Eugène had, he himself was surrounded very naturally, because probably of the family ties and friendships, by books and so on relating to the very first archeologists. (Interview September 28, 1970)

When very young, Charlot read completely Charnay's *Les Anciennes Villes du Nouveau Monde: Voyages d'Explorations au Mexique et dans l'Amérique Centrale*.¹⁴⁹ Charlot was excited by the book and loved what he described as the frontispiece with Charnay dressed in a loincloth in the jungle.¹⁵⁰ Charlot was particularly interested in the tomb where the whistle Charnay gave him had been found, the same tomb that contained the notorious dog on wheels.¹⁵¹ He remembered seeing the picture of a burden bearer, *cargador*, later one of his own themes. A number of examples of the subject can be found in the book;¹⁵² the one closest to Charlot's own work is the impressive vignette on page 12 of the French edition, drawn by Riou from a photograph. On page 70 of the French edition and 91 of the English, is a less impressive illustration of an Indian house.

The most important book Charlot studied during this period was Eugène Boban's catalog of the Goupil collection: *Documents pour servir à l'Histoire du Mexique: Catalogue Raisonné de la Collection de M. E.-Eugène Goupil (Ancienne Collection J.-M.-A. Aubin)* (1891) in two text volumes and an *Atlas* (1891). From his tenth to his twelfth year, he recalled, he read the text partially, but studied the *Atlas* more. Although the photographs seem poor by today's standards, they were the best possible at the time, and their large format fit the sheets of the codices. Starting in late 1914, Charlot would study the originals at the Bibliothèque Nationale.¹⁵³ In the *Atlas*, he was exposed to a long-developed tradition of picture stories as a high art in which techniques of communication had been created that produced an impressive legibility. Even more, the images themselves were used in the recitation of words and at times even represented words, connecting word and image more closely than was usual in Western art. Indeed, Charlot will write as a heading over his notes on the Goupil Collection, "peinture histoire." Around 1911–1913, Charlot was inspired to draw a *Life of Napoleon* in the style of Aztec historical codices. In the *Atlas* are subjects that became important for Charlot, such as burden bearers (plate 64) and Spaniards in armor, versions of whom were used in his first fresco, and his use of a number of images from the *Atlas* are clear in his later work (John Charlot 1990–1991: 67 note 14). Charlot seems to have been impressed by the style of the codices as much as by their subjects. He said several times that in looking at an Aztec picture of a house, he realized that the Aztec artists were more cubist than the Cubists. In the *Atlas* are excellent examples of conventional Aztec depictions of houses as well as courtyard complexes and temples.¹⁵⁴

Along with the Old Masters, Mexican art became one of Charlot's foundations. Aztec artworks were "my A.B.C. of modern art."¹⁵⁵ Speaking of Cubism, he said that most people at the time thought of it as something new:

I never had that feeling about Cubism. I thought it was a fine thing, it was a nice thing, but there was not at all the sense of the fashionable or fashion speaking of Cubism. And when I speak of Old Masters, I should say they were not only the Old

Masters of the Louvre, but for example, and very strongly so, the pre-Hispanic manuscripts and codexes and codices of my uncle, Eugène Goupil... So I studied those manuscripts directly, and you know enough about the Aztec drawings and the Aztec conventions of drawing, and so on, both in people and landscapes, to know that those are much more Cubist than anything that the Cubists ever did. So in a way, Cubism was something that I could compare with things that I was very familiar with and that very few people were familiar with. Then they have looked at Aztec drawings, but they hadn't soaked, so to speak, into the style of the Aztecs as I had before. So my Old Masters are the Louvre, my Old Masters are the Mexican codices, and so on. And there was no place for surprise and excitement about modern art, as so many people felt surprise and excitement looking at the new forms of art.

(Interview September 21, 1970)

Charlot's knowledge of Mexican art clearly prepared him for his encounter with Mexico:

in the codices, of course, which I looked at when I was young, there are many of the actual postures, mostly of the women, that I saw in Mexico. Again there, that was a double image. That is, when I was looking at the Mexico of my day and of the actual people doing the house chores, I had at the back of my head the vision of the manuscripts, of the drawings of the ancient Aztec painters, representing similar movements, similar motifs, some five hundred, six hundred years before. (Interview October 1, 1970)

the most important thing was really that when I went to Mexico, I already was soaked, so to speak, into all the things I was going to meet there. There was—I always come back to Ozenfant and his preforms—there was a premeeting with Mexico long before, long before I met Mexico, so that makes things pretty difficult. They were already assimilated, so to speak, even at the very moment that I discovered them. (Interview May 18, 1971)

Charlot's first paintings of people in Mexico were a genuine coming together of his knowledge of Cubism and Mexican Indian art:

Those big heads—I mean, I come back to those things as being the most obvious style or early style in Mexico—were really quite French in the cubing of the faces. I don't know that I had in mind at the time some of the early sculptures of Picasso, the head that is all faceted, but it's very similar to that anyhow. As I said, the only difference which makes it not wholly French but already Mexican is a respect for my subject matter. There was, perhaps, a certain uncertainty about the new accessories, paraphernalia... So there is a certain uncertainty or surprise about the subject matter that disappears later on, and there is a strong scaffolding of French know-how that we can call early Cubism, which also later on is much less obvious. On the other hand, this very same feature which I call French can also be construed as being from my

knowledge of Mexican things because it's obvious that looking at those people, I didn't think of them as flesh but as hard matter, hard obsidian and so on. That is, a faceting that the French had used without any sense of weight or texture, I would say, in early Cubism, with me became a way of changing the flesh into hard stone. And I think that already is Mexican.

Characteristically, the coming together of art was joined to the coming together of human beings:

Well, my own knowledge of Mexican Indians and specifically Aztecs, because my models there were Aztecs, was academic, not in the sense that the Frenchman would speak of it, but academic in the sense that I was already very well aware of the Prehispanic forms of art, both in the manuscripts and in the sculptures, terra cottas and so on: that is, the Indian's own way of looking at himself. And there is a definite sculptural quality, faceting in hard material, we could say, in those early portraits. And I think there is in there a lot of obvious dignity that I had learned from the pre-Hispanic collections. I always come back to my Uncle Eugène Goupil, because I knew those things very well. So it's a mixture of my knowledge of antiquities and, so to speak, the first contacts with live Indians in their habitat. Now, that is a first impression that, so to speak, I couldn't recapture, because when I made friends and was invited in Indian homes and so on, something else emerged which was, perhaps as I suggested, less academic and more simply human. That is, the things that we had in common rather than the things that seemed foreign to myself in the first contact.

3.4.9. CHARLOT'S ARTISTIC TENDENCIES UP TO 1914

In his interests and in his own artwork, Charlot displayed early the tendencies that would carry him through his career. That is, the main lines of Charlot's own sensibility and art mission—geometric composition, narrative art, and mural scale—were developing from his childhood taste; they would become firm in the next period of his life. Ultimately, Charlot would join Classicism, Cubism, and Mexican Indian art to form his personal foundation. Implied in all his work is the importance of craft.

Charlot himself saw his development as the result of an inner direction towards mural painting:

Well, perhaps the common denominator of all my things is mural painting. Of course I can't reason why it was so, but from the beginning I knew that I was a mural painter, and I went through a number of styles in art. Of course if I start from being very young, I have, for example, my first mural-to-be, which never happened, was nevertheless done in great detail and to scale, and that was something close enough to the Post-Impressionism, let's say, of Denis, close enough to a man like Marcel Lenoir, which is rather difficult to describe as a stylist. Soon after that, I did a few things that you could call, well, in a Cubist language. That was still pretty early, before 1920.

But of each thing, I extracted the possibilities that would allow me to do murals.

(Interview September 19, 1970)

And the early Cubists pinpointed too much the fact that he had painted still lifes of bottles and glasses and fruit dishes and did not follow his lead in the greater themes, though Cézanne himself did some of the great themes. For example, his *Apotheosis of Delacroix*, in his representation of woman and man in symbolical poses and so on, he went much further than his Cubist followers in accepting the importance of the theme. In a way I am glad that I am a mural painter because it allowed me without pretending to originality, if you want, to fall into the beaten path of the Academicians of the seventeenth century, which seem to me to be the right [thing]. (Interview October 1, 1970)

The direction towards muralism was at the basis of his movement from Impressionistic works to the more line-emphatic style of his liturgical art. When I asked him about that movement, he replied:

it's exactly the same thing that you mentioned as architecture. I mean we mustn't see architecture as houses and buildings but as forms that are defined against space. The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists were very careful to fuzz over the limits between volume and space and very early, maybe because of that mural tendency, I knew that I couldn't afford that and that I had to make a clear definition between volume and space, though I had to use both of them. (Interview September 14, 1970)

The very sketchiness that had early appealed to him in some modern artists became "a negative":

That whole generation of modern masters has been satisfied with a certain—not superficial approach, but a hurried approach to the problems of craft and of painting, and maybe there my mural training comes into the picture. It's very interesting that even the people who tried to use Rouault to do monumental work failed. (Interview September 19, 1970)

Murals required geometric composition to which Charlot tended from at least the age of two. His drawing of a running ostrich suggests that he had an innate feeling for the geometry of the page, an inborn tendency to organize his lines. He developed this tendency consciously through his early drawings and in fact throughout his life. As stated above, for Charlot, geometric composition was the sine qua non of great art; other qualities were needed, but geometry was indispensable. He differentiated Daumier as a great artist from Gavarni as a good one by the fact that Daumier's compositions could be analyzed geometrically, but Gavarni's could not. Geometry was not imposed by the artist but perceived by him in nature; Daumier did not deduce his geometry from books but realized it from "his heightened visual experience" (Charlot "Daumier" 1980: 59). Geometry was in fact an essential of human experience:

Two main laws—horizontal and vertical—are paired and strung implacably straight: the first law is the plumbline of gravity that each of us carries inside himself as if it were a physical conscience, so to speak, ready to reproach man his least attempt at obliquity. The law embodied in water levels checks from a whole ocean to the content of a cocktail glass. Between the prongs of this compass, set at right angles to

each other, man lives cautiously, as if they were the jaws of the dragon that was an essential prop of mediaeval mystery plays. (AA I 202)

Geometry reveals the essential form of God's creation. Charlot thus compares the artist's quest to that of the religious devotee, using an expression of mystical literature, discussed below:

the artist longs for rest, for a superior state in which incidentals, without being annulled, may be allowed to register correctly within the frame of a stable absolute...
[Josef] Albers' art longs for this state of repose as does a saint for unitive vision...
(AA I 204)

The mystic and the artist seek the same truth, as is particularly clear in Edward Weston's photographs (AA I: 176).

Geometry was central to the Classical tradition. In his "Notes sur des Artistes Grecs" of 1921 or 1922, Charlot copied:

Il soutenait que l'art ne pouvait se perfectionner *sans les mathématiques et la géométrie*.

'He argued that art could not be perfected *without mathematics and geometry*.'

Parrhasius assurait qu'un peintre ne pouvait se perfectionner dans son art s'il n'entendait la géométrie.

'Parrhasius assured that a painter could not perfect himself in his art if he did not understand geometry.'

But Charlot could analyze the geometric composition of artists who were also from other cultures, which led him to believe that all great artists thought alike. Great art involved and engaged the highest intellectual capacities of the human being as well as his senses. Great art addressed the whole human being and demanded a total human response. Moreover, geometric composition suited Charlot not only because of his intellectual power but also because of his physical talents. From his childhood, he had a particular talent for drawing, endowing his lines with character and direction. His work fulfills the classical ideal of delectation: appealing to all dimensions of the human being.

Charlot's view might have some connection to Counter-Reformation theologies that considered Euclidean geometry to be God's hidden order of Creation. But Charlot was well aware of Post-Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries and knew that no single geometry sufficed to cover all problems. Just like different art traditions, such geometries participated in the exploration of a mystery that was ultimately ungraspable even by diverse geometries or styles. This realization freed mathematicians and artists from conventional views and empowered their personal vision.

Geometry—understood in this broad sense—was thus essential to Charlot's sense of composition. Moreover, his early correspondence reveals that mathematics and science were important for his thinking and view of life. On March 29, 1925, he wrote to the young Anita Brenner:

Tienes mucho instinto pero te falta cierto grado de cultura general : sobre todo historia (assimilarse las civilizaciones passadas como te assimilaste Mexico)...Other point : Ciencias exactas : especially geometry : Con tu cerebro, te seria de provecho y es fuente inagotable de comparaciones, casi todo un modo de rasonar logico diferente de la filosofia (do you understand?!)

‘You have much instinct but you lack a certain level of general culture: above all history (the past civilizations should be assimilated as you have assimilated Mexico). Other point: the exact sciences: especially geometry: with your brain, it would be profitable and is an inexhaustible source of comparisons, almost wholly a means of logical reasoning different from philosophy (do you understand?!)’

When he worried that Brenner was being attracted to an enthusiastic religious group, Charlot wrote her on February 2, 1925: “Mas valdria para ti estudiar geometria” ‘It would be more useful for you to study geometry.’ He even describes his feelings for her in scientific terms:

You know I appreciate [*sic*] you at your justo valor this is to say : Hay equilibrio entre me affeccion y el objeto de la dicha affeccion. Do you remember in physic the definition of el equilibrio estable : que la cosa despues de cualquier movimiento regresa a la posicion inicial. (“Cuando yo estaba”)

‘You know I appreciate you at your true value, this is to say: There is equilibrium between my affection and the object of said affection. Do you remember in physic the definition of a stable equilibrium: that after any movement the thing returns to its initial position.’

Charlot continued to be interested in mathematics, explaining to me as a child the advantage of duodecimal counting systems over decimal: twelve was divisible by two, three, and four; ten by only two and five. He was also intrigued by non-Euclidean systems (Charlot 1976: 8). When I was young, he discussed in detail with me the unsolved problems of mathematics, like squaring the circle. He told me that mathematics was, like art, a way of describing nature. In fact, mathematics could describe nature more accurately than conventional realism.

Charlot’s emphasis on narrative art can also be traced to his earliest childhood and remained central to his thinking and work:

I believe that story telling in art is nearly an obligation of great art. I think that anybody who has visited the museum realizes that, anyhow, story telling is nothing against art. In my opinion they go together. (Lesley and Hollis, August 18, 1961: 9)

I really have worshiped, visually anyhow, the old masters, and I was always interested in the story telling in their work. (13)

Moreover, for Charlot, narrative, geometry, and muralism were inseparable parts of a whole. To the two geometric laws of vertical and horizontal, Charlot added:

A third law, equally faceless, is one of rhythm, meaning for us mostly the clocked beat of the heart and meticulous intake of breath, computable in intervals and numbers, as crucial as they are untranslatable in terms of story-telling. (AA II 202 f.)

Speaking of Ingres' *The Martyrdom of Saint Symphorien*, he made the fundamental point:

all those arms, all those weapons are worked out into one single geometric composition. And I have rarely seen such a clear expression of the fact that storytelling and great art should be one, that is, if you really wish to tell the story clearly, you have to further the complexities of your composition. Then great art comes in not through a desire of doing great art, I don't think any great artist ever had that desire, but through a desire of telling a story. The color scheme in that picture is also superb; it has been done mostly with grays and browns, really the mud colors when you analyze them. And the color that hits you very much on purpose, very much in the plan of Ingres, as a strong vermilion red, for example, is just a red earth, a rather dull one when you isolate it, but superb as an intense red in the middle of all those other colors. That thing is one of the great masterpieces that blend together, not only without clash, but you can't separate them, storytelling and composition. (Interview September 17, 1970)

That narrative is the ultimate basis of art for Charlot is clear in the above statement. Indeed, Charlot's emphasis on narrative was such that he could use the label for all genres of art (June 22, 1966) and spoke of infusing his flower paintings with drama. In Charlot's view, this placed him in a definite tradition:

I *like* storytelling...the great classic French paintings, for example, Poussin, are much more elaborated on the storytelling part than similar subject matter even when it is treated by the great Italians. A man like Titian used, of course, storytelling, that was what his patrons expected, and he has bacchanals and so on, but they are really a pretext to what we could call freehand painting, while Poussin all his life, it seems to me, fights against freehand painting to establish a solid storytelling. And that is true of my things, too. In all my murals I have been very careful to establish storytelling, and if I had to choose, I would say, between an artistic effect and a proper telling of the story, I've always chosen the proper telling of the story. And that, I think, comes from many things, from my father telling me when I was a child those Russian stories, from Poussin in the Louvre having a similar serious attitude on his responsibility as a storyteller in paint. (Interview September 15, 1970)

The emphasis on narrative art had important implications for Charlot's view of the artist. A narrator is not working for himself: "Storytelling implies an audience" to which he must communicate clearly and effectively (June 22, 1966). The narrator is therefore a member of a community that he serves in his special way. Moreover, effective communication involves the suppression of distractions: the artist's ego and the means he uses must not themselves obscure the message through inappropriate

display. The paradoxically complex means needed for effective communication must therefore remain to a certain degree unnoticed:

those are some of the problems that we use in mural painting, and the interesting thing is that even though the solutions are very complex and rather esoteric, the desire of the painter is to make things easy to the onlooker. (Interview September 17, 1970)

On the other hand, effective communication is not a manipulative deception of the viewer:

when I speak of storytelling, I am not speaking of telling a lie. That is, you have to tell your story; you have also to bring back, we could say, the spectator to the fact that he is looking at a flat surface on which colors have been put, as Maurice Denis said... To come back to the *Saint Symphorien* of Ingres, you don't think that you are looking inside the Roman courtyard and that you see a fellow going to his martyrdom and good guys and bad guys gesticulating around him. The very fact that it is in a certain order arranged makes it a different thing from fooling you... in painting it isn't the painter's business to fool people to that extent. They just propose; that is, when we speak of storytelling, we really mean telling a story. There is the storyteller telling a story, and the images can be mental images, but they are not the actual goings-on that happen in the story. It's a subtle point; but it's a very important one and is the difference between the so-called realistic painter or photographic painter who—when we use the word it means he is not a very good painter—and a great storyteller, again a man like Ingres and his *Saint Symphorien*. So I go to, in my own work, I go to great precautions to tell a story, let's say the *Mother and Child* and the relationship of both and the tenderness and all those things, but I also want to bring people back to the fact that it is storytelling, not an actual woman and child, and the natural thing there; of course all those things are not conscious and analytical and separated one from the other. But the distortion of objects, for example, reassures people that they are not seeing, let's say, little people, little leprechauns or little *menehunes*, but that they are looking at a picture... And I think that anybody gets too enthusiastic about telling a story starts really gesticulating and forgetting, forgetting that it has to remain an illusion. (Interview September 17, 1970)

For Charlot, art had all the complexity and moral imperatives of life; communication was ultimately the relationship between human beings.

3.5. SCHOOLS: LE COURS HATTEMER AND CONDORCET

Charlot received a valuable education at home and was then sent to one of the best schools in Paris, Le Cours Hattemer. The normal age to be sent to school was six years old in 1904. The question can be asked why he was not sent to a Roman Catholic school. The French government had recently instituted a series of laws against religious institutions of education, including the forced sale of some church properties used for schools. Schools run by religious congregations had been closed by law in

1904, but other Roman Catholic schools were still operating (Duroselle 1972: 251, 257–261). In any case, Henri Charlot was not a Catholic, and even devout French Catholic parents sent their children to the excellent nondenominational schools available. For instance, Fénelon, the Catholic school that corresponded to Hattemer, sent its departing students to Condorcet. Such excellent schooling was expensive and thus available only to the wealthy (Duroselle 1972: 72).

Le Cours Hattemer was a comparatively small, distinguished, progressive, and fashionable school: “Mesdemoiselles Hattemer were the best school in Paris. At least that was their own opinion of their school, and I think it probably wasn’t far from the truth.”¹⁵⁶ Then in the Rue Clapeyron (Paris VIII), where it had been housed since 1885,¹⁵⁷ slightly northwest of the Eglise de la Sainte Trinité, about ten minutes walk from the Charlots’ home, Le Cours Hattemer, like Condorcet, drew many of its students from central Paris. The course had been created after the war of 1870—in which France had been disastrously defeated by Prussia—and experimented, as it still does, with new ideas and methods on the firm basis of the structured and demanding traditional French pedagogy. The course had been founded by two sisters, *les demoiselles Hattemer*, who were still active in the school, giving its education a personal stamp as well as a family feeling. The school was in fact lodged in a former *hôtel particulier*, an urban mansion, and classes usually contained only nineteen students. Hattemer was an all-boys school, including all primary and secondary grades from kindergarten; and unusually for France, the students of all grades rubbed shoulders, adding to the general family feeling of the school. Unlike the state schools, Hattemer started at a comfortable 9:00 AM and ended early for France, around 4:00 PM. The parents of the students were actively involved, attending weekly examinations in assembly and distributions of prizes. The family feeling persists among the school’s alumni today.

In 1877, correspondence courses were started—thus the name, “the Hattemer course”—for students being tutored at home, for children of diplomats abroad, and for gifted children, such as musical and theatrical prodigies who went on tour. This aspect of the school was influential in allowing students to proceed at their individual pace and in encouraging the arts and creativity. Besides the usual French emphasis on correct language and spelling—and Hattemer is known for stressing writing—the children were obliged early to memorize poems and to analyze their structure. Unusually, the students were also pushed to create their own. Classes were required also in art-making—drawing and painting—and in art history or appreciation.

The curriculum was therefore a combination of old and new. Students started learning English at eight years old and Latin at nine, earlier than in the state schools. Later, at Condorcet, Latin was a very important subject, the last chapter in the history of the older scholastic world. Many students could even speak a little, but Charlot seems to have limited his use of Latin to church and liturgical texts, using the Latin Missal; he was, however, convinced of its importance in education. He was happy that I myself was able to take Latin at Catholic high schools and urged me to continue my study in college. Charlot never learned Greek, which would have been a later school option, although he apparently read widely in translation.¹⁵⁸ Charlot’s parents clearly stressed English, hiring an English governess for him and sending him to England in the summers of 1912 and 1913 in order to provide “some sort of international flavor in my life” (Interview October 22, 1970). He might have learned some German at home from his father,

who was a native speaker of that language. In *Troisième Mystère : Le couronnement d'épines* of September 1922 (1920–1924 Civil), he includes in the catalog of his education: “Je parle l’allemand, l’espagnol et l’anglais” ‘I speak German, Spanish, and English.’

Hattermer was nondenominational and respected the liberty of thought of its Jewish and atheist students. Nonetheless, the school was culturally Christian; a prayer was said at the beginning of the school day, while the non-Christian students were allowed to amuse themselves outside the classrooms (creating some jealousy among the others). Moreover, unlike state schools, Hattermer offered courses in religion, which were basically Christian; for instance, the Bible was studied. However, strictly denominational courses were not offered. When the students prepared for their first Holy Communion, no priest was brought to the school; the students attended catechism classes at their parish church. There was no sex education whatsoever.

Le Cours Hattermer appears to be a school well suited to the young Charlot. In fact, the friction with his art teacher, discussed above, occurred at his next school. I conclude from the available evidence that Charlot transferred to the sixth form at Condorcet in the fall of 1909, that is, at the age of eleven and in the first year of the *lycée*.¹⁵⁹ Condorcet was a few minutes away on foot from Charlot’s home in the Chaussée d’Antin, and he would have arrived at the Place G. Berry directly in front of the school’s famous classical façade on the rue Caumartin; the *lycée* extends through the whole block to its other entrance at 8, rue du Havre, down the street from the Gare St. Lazare. Condorcet was and still is one of the best schools in France, and the *Hattermeriens* were encouraged to apply to it for admission. Students needed to take a demanding entrance examination, but about 60 percent of the *Hattermeriens* passed it. Hattermer was a socially protective environment, and the students were urged to attend state schools in order to meet people from other classes. The students at Condorcet, again all male, were rougher according to the standards of the time, sometimes fighting and using *argot*. The general atmosphere was adult, and manners were formal. Teachers called students by their last name and used the formal *vous*. Students also called each other by their last name, but used the familiar *tu*.¹⁶⁰ Students wore ties, and Charlot was dressed unusually without one in a fifth form photograph. Detention halls were used for punishment; never physical means. Lunches could be had at a refectory, but the food was considered bad—pebbles were found in the lentils. Typically for France, from the fourth form on, a little wine was put in the water; the students called it “L’Abondance.”

Condorcet was an outstanding but conventional school. The teachers were excellent; all had earned higher degrees in their subjects. The classes had twenty-five students, larger than the ones of nineteen at Hattermer, but they were still small by today’s standards. Schoolwork was extremely disciplined and onerous. Parental participation was much weaker than at Hattermer; notice of grades was given three times a semester. The school had no library; students bought their books and used the public library at the City Hall, if they had their parents’ permission.

Charlot recalled that the history taught was very chauvinist, and he had to go to England to be exposed to another perspective. Charlot remembered himself as an academically unexceptional student, “good in some things and bad in others” (Interview November 6, 1970); “I was neutral on most

subjects” (Interview October 22, 1970). He did well in literature and French composition (Interviews October 22, 1970, November 6, 1970).

Charlot later felt that his worst subject was mathematics:

there were some I couldn’t stand. That was mathematics; my poor mathematics teacher suffered a lot from me. I remember that I told my father such horror stories about him that my father went and saw him and told him how heartless he was with me, which, of course, didn’t endear me to the dear professor of mathematics.

(Interview October 22, 1970)

Perhaps Henri was transferring Hattemer family participation to Condorcet. In any case, mathematics would prove one of the most valuable subjects Charlot learned at school, perhaps even lifesaving: once inducted into the army, Charlot was able to pass the mathematics examination and become an officer of artillery rather than a foot soldier. I have no information about Charlot’s science classes, but he followed discoveries in various fields with interest and even excitement, especially in human evolution. I remember his enthusiasm when a four-legged fish was found in the early 1950s.

At Condorcet, Charlot also studied German: “a spattering [*sic*] of English and German at the time, my two languages” (Interview October 22, 1970). A poem of September 1914 is written on the back of his lesson in *Fraktur*, German script, and he read at least Heinrich Heine’s poetry and later Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Charlot was able to use and to improve his German during the Occupation, and I remember him speaking German, somewhat haltingly, with the mason helping him on his *Fourteen Panels Symbolizing the Fine Arts* at St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana, in the summer of 1955. Again, no instruction in sexuality was offered, although the students were of an age to need some.

Courses were offered once a week in drawing and painting in watercolors by teachers who had good degrees from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The emphases were academic. Students started by learning perspective. In the fourth form, when the students were around thirteen years old, they would work from a model, one of their schoolmates. In the next year until the end of school, they would draw plaster casts of classical sculpture. Proficiency in drawing was a requirement for acceptance into the higher schools, like the Ecole Polytechnique, so students tended to become more serious about their art classes as they neared the end of their time at the *lycée*. Later, Charlot had to content himself with working in the *coulisses* ‘corridors’ of the Beaux-Arts, instead of as a regular student, because of “the refusal of the Beaux-Arts to accept my drawing of a plaster cast as an entrance examination.”¹⁶¹

None of Charlot’s school essays survive, but his tendencies can be found in his marginalia. He shows a wide acquaintance with literature. To give just three examples, in his copy of *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac* (1676), he inserted a piece of paper with the words: “Ronscar Anagramme de Scarron qui fit L’Enéide travestie” ‘Ronscar is the anagram of Scarron who wrote *L’Enéide travestie*.’ In volume 6, page 278, of *Théâtre de P. Corneille, avec les commentaires de Voltaire* (1797), at the line “Tombe sur moi le ciel, pourvu que je me venge !”, Charlot noted a parallel: “Périsse

l'Univers, pourvu que je me venge ! Cyrano: Agrippine.” In Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures* (1911: 15), he noted at the first stanza of *Printemps*: “comparer avec Heine” ‘compare with Heine.’ (On the other hand, at the rime *Montague/dague*, he added an umlaut over *Montagüe* and wrote: “ne rime pas avec dague” ‘does not rime with *dague*’) In his copy of *Les Oeuvres de Theophile* (1661), he inserted pages with a table of contents and a life of the poet.

Charlot was very appreciative of creative writers. In Legouvé's *Épicharis et Néron ou Conspiration pour la Liberté* (L'An Deuxième), he inserted a paper with the remarks: “sc. IV visions très bien amenés par la terreur et l'obscurité” ‘scene IV vision well presented by terror and obscurity’; “sc. I Il est fin de faire parler par surtout Talma jouant” ‘Scene I, It is fine to have it spoken by...especially with Talma in the role’; “incarn [?] de ‘l'ennui des vers’ de Néron, les mauvais vers étant un supplice pour un poète” ‘incarnation [?] by “the tediousness of the verses” of Nero, bad verse being a torture for a poet’; “Acte III scn II : beau vers” ‘Act III scene II: good verse.’ Charlot was reading poetry as one engaged in the art; he proposed his own translation in place of “*double, double, chaudron trouble, que le feu brûle, que l'eau bouille, double, double*”:

Double, doublement travaille
et te trouble
Feu, brûle et chaudron boût
(C'est pour le rythme surtout)¹⁶²

‘Double, work doubly
and stir yourself
Fire, burn and cauldron boil
(It's mainly for the rhythm)’

Characteristically, Charlot was willing to defend the poets even against as august an editor as Voltaire, whose *Théâtre de P. Corneille* (1797) he was reading. At Voltaire's note “*Nous n'avons que craindre*, est un barbarisme. Cette pièce en a beaucoup; mais, encore une fois, c'est la première de Corneille” ‘*We have only to fear*, is a barbarism. This play has a lot of them, but again, it's the first by Corneille’ (volume 3, page 46, note 2); Charlot wrote, “Et les comédies ?” ‘And the comedies?’ Voltaire writes:

Le spectateur est indigné qu'après la mort du grand *Pompée*, dont il est rempli,
Ptolomée et *Cléopâtre* s'amuse à parler de *Photin*, et que *Cléopâtre* dise en vers de comédie qu'elle rit de son projet.

Non, mais en liberté je ris de son projet.

Il faut, autant qu'on le peut, fixer toujours l'attention du public sur les grands objets,
et parler peu des petits, mais avec dignité.

Cette froide scène devient encore moins tragique par les petites ironies du frère
et de la sœur. (volume 5, page 229, note 1)

‘The spectator is indignant that after the death of the great *Pompey*—which still holds the spectator—*Ptolemy* and *Cleopatra* amuse themselves by speaking of *Photin*, and that *Cleopatra* states in verses from a comedy that she *scorns his project*.

No, but in liberty I scorn his project.

It is necessary, as much as one can, always to fix the attention of the audience on the main objects and to speak little of the small ones, but with dignity.

This cold scene becomes even less tragic because of the little ironies of the brother and the sister.’

Charlot countered:

grand car Ptolémée veut paraître ignorer l’assassinat [*sic*] et Cleopâtre, par orgueil cache sa douleur. La note est donc fausse.

‘great because Ptolemy wants to seem to ignore the assassination and Cleopatra, through pride, hides her pain. [Voltaire’s] note is thus false.’

Similarly, Voltaire objects to a line:

Peut-être il ne lui faut qu’un soupir et deux larmes. C’est là un des plus étranges vers qu’on ait jamais faits en quelque genre que ce puisse être. Mais ce n’est qu’un vers aisé à corriger, au lieu que les froids et inutiles discours d’*Andromède* et du chœur des nymphes ne peuvent être embellis. (volume 7, page 359, note 1)

‘*Maybe he is due only one sigh and two tears.* That is one of the strangest lines ever written in any possible genre. But it’s a verse easy to correct, whereas the cold and useless speeches of Andromeda and of the nymphs’ chorus cannot be made beautiful.’

Charlot argued most interestingly: “1 soupir et 2 larmes, 1 pour chaque oeil, c’est à dire le minimum. Pas à corriger” ‘1 sigh and 2 tears, 1 for each eye, that is to say, the minimum. Not to be corrected.’ When Voltaire writes, “*Andromède* accable trop ce *Phinée*” ‘*Andromeda* is too hard on this *Phineas*’ (volume 7, page 363, note 1); Charlot made the interesting point: “par Dépit...Andr est toute jeune et ‘instinctive’” ‘because of spite...Andromeda is very young and “instinctive.”’ Charlot was even willing to cross swords on art theory. When Voltaire writes “au théâtre il faut sentir” ‘at the theatre, it is necessary to feel’ (volume 3, page 105, note 1); Charlot added a word: “faire sentir” ‘make feel.’ Charlot always had more respect for artists than critics. In his fragmentary poem *Jeu* of July 1914, he writes:

La critique est facile
mon cher Monsieur mais l’Art
est difficile.

‘Criticism is easy,
my dear sir, but Art
is difficult.’

Charlot seemed more active outside of school, especially in his artwork and poetry and in his own reading and book collecting. Also, boxing was “my only *éclat*, my only glory, came when I got into boxing and became one of the champions of boxing in scholarly circles. From then on there was a certain respect on the part of my fellow students and perhaps some of the teachers” (Interview October 22, 1970). Condorcet had a basement gymnasium, but no organized sports, just a fifteen-minute morning recess. Boxing was an exceptional sport for the students, and training had to be sought outside of school.

Visiting his school friends impressed him with possible differences of lifestyle and taste: “But as for strictly friendships in college, they were casual, or we got together for certain ideas that we had that were, well, juvenile.” For instance, Charlot had long been interested in aviation: “I know that I was hipped on airplanes, or what we called airplanes at the time.”¹⁶³ Enthusiasm for planes was even greater in Europe than in America, and France took the lead in aviation as the Wright brothers faded. In *Juvenilia 1904* (19a recto), Charlot has drawn a skyscape with a plane rising towards a cloud and the sun beyond it. A dirigible takes part in a battle (80b verso). Balloons and dirigibles are prominent in *Cutouts 1907* (7, 10, 11, 13, 15) and are depicted simply but with knowledge of their parts. When in the early 1970s, I mistakenly described an early balloon as a dirigible seen from the front, Charlot noted: “Montgolfiere—had a set of cards on history of aviation.”

In 1909 and 1910—that is, at the end of his years at Hattemer and the beginning of those at Condorcet—France had become for a time the center of aviation. Charlot belonged to a schoolboy aviation club, unusual in that it was not based in a single school:

We had for a while a newspaper, I would say a periodical, that we published on the news of the heavier-than-air; that is, the aeroplane was coming up at the time, and we had a little newspaper that was mimeographed about aviation. I think you’ll find some of those in our files somewhere here. I think I was eleven years old at the time. I wrote part of the reports on the new discoveries in the newspaper, and then we gave models of paper airplanes, how to fold the paper and make new forms, newfangled forms of airplanes. It’s strictly contemporary with the first flights at least outside the United States, of the Wright Brothers and so on. So it shows a certain excitement at some brand-new stuff happening in the world, connected not with art, of course, but with mechanics, with machinery. (Interview October 22, 1970)

The journal was called *Les Aïrs*, and Charlot kept several numbers that are now in the Jean Charlot Collection. The journal ran from February 15, 1909 (No. 1) through at least January 1910 (No. 10), and a further number was announced for February 10 along with an almanac. The journal was supposed to appear on the first and fifteenth of every month; by No. 9, it was a monthly, but plans were being made to return to two issues a month. The first two issues are handwritten; No. 9 is polygraphed (mimeographed?) with color added by hand. No. 10 is polygraphed with some writing by hand.

The main person behind the journal was Robert Louyot (16, rue de la Folie Méricourt; later 30 Bd Raspail, finally 28 Bd. Raspail; also at Bornel, Oise, possibly a summer house). He initialed most of the articles, later did the printing, and carried on the correspondence. In the *Supplement aux Aïrs* No. 2

(n.d.), he called himself “le Bon génie des *Airs*.” In No. 9 (December 1909), he was the administrator and T. Borlusy, the editor. In 1910, he called himself the President. Pierre Marquet, in the January 1910 issue (page 3), recorded his invention on December 2, 1909, of a paper glider. Marquet was Charlot’s friend and collaborator on the 1910 puppet theater.

The journal contained plans for paper airplanes and gliders, articles and serials on the history of aviation—especially great aviators (the Wright brothers, Ferber, Latham)—a report on Zodiac dirigibles, contests, a caricature of an aviator, and miscellaneous editorial items, such as an evaluation poll of readers of the journal. None of the articles in the surviving journals were signed by Charlot. The journal was illustrated, but clearly not by Charlot. Louyot illustrated his personal letters, so he was probably the artist of the journal. Although the drawings are childish, the prose is adult and even precocious. The condition of membership was to invent a new paper glider, and good research was done for the articles. By American standards, these French eleven-year-olds were unusually well educated, articulate, and adult.

In an envelope addressed by Louyot to J. Charlot have been kept one plan for a paper glider and three letters. One letter seems to be from 1909: Louyot asks for a second copy of an airplane since he lost the first and asks whether “Monsieur” likes the new printing. He wants Charlot’s list of possible members. The two other letters seem to be from 1910; the shorter one is dated February 21, 1910. The longer letter asks a number of questions about the journal and finishes by saying that there are now seven members in the society and Charlot has been elected vice president, assistant editor, and principal collaborator. Louyot is president, editor, and administrator. All the others are “membres simples” ‘simple members.’ He thanks Charlot for his latest “aéro.” This letter is signed with a friendly “Je te serre la main,” whereas the other letters were signed formally. The shorter letter thanks Charlot for his long letter and asks to meet for conversation.

A special section on model airplanes in the *Sketchbook 1910* is in all likelihood connected to Charlot’s association with *Les Airs*. Models are presented both in exterior and interior views: “w ‘xray’ view of seated passengers” (Charlot’s notes on my list sheets from the 1970s). National pride is evident in a model that sports a French flag on its nose. The sketches are assured; the line clear and workmanlike.

During World War I, Charlot finally flew in an airplane for the first time. He remembered the bamboo struts of the biplane and the fact that he could put his foot out onto the lower wing. Peter Charlot recalled in an e-mail to me, May 9, 1999:

He told me that he remembered sitting with three or four other soldiers in a plane whose wooden shell was wrapped in thick cloth. They sat on boards with their feet hanging out in the air. They flew over enemy territory and hand grenades were handed to him. These he proceeded to drop between his knees onto the enemy below.

Charlot made a drawing of an exhibition of airplanes in the court of the Hôtel des Invalides in January 1916. When we were children, he taught us to make and fly paper airplanes. Peter remembered (June 29,

1998): “I was fascinated watching him and can remember flying them in the living room of our faculty housing home” in the 1950s.

Charlot’s stories of staying in England in 1912 and 1913 with “five or six little Frenchmen” show he still had his childish high spirits.

when I was big enough to be more or less on my own, I was sent to England twice. I never went to London at the time; I just stayed on the south coast. And I was rooming—the one that I remember the best—when I was rooming at a parson. A parson was a very religious man. There were a little group of Frenchmen there, and on Sundays he didn’t want us to do anything, not even to play billiards. That was considered sinful. So it suggested to us all kind of tricks, of course, and things to take our revenge on the poor parson. And then another thing, those episodes are not very interesting, but we were in the countryside and we were pursued by a bunch of children our age, more or less, who told us we were frog eaters. So we were very mad at the little guys and we turned on them, and eventually they, I think they climbed on a tree, and their father came, ready to beat us up, and we explained to him that they had insulted us, saying we were frog eaters. He said, well, they could come down, and we could forget the incident. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Charlot and his group sneaked into “a lowbrow-music hall” with a Turkish belly-dancer and developed a taste for some English specialties: “those very small clam-like things that were pickled in vinegar.” Charlot retained a taste for certain English foods, like steak-and-kidney pie and Rose’s Lime Juice. He liked the English, but joked that they and the Japanese were the two peoples he could not understand.

3.6.

POETRY

Like art and storytelling, poetizing was a family activity of the Charlots. Henri wrote at least one serious poem but apparently more doggerel and translations of Russian poems. Charlot’s own *C’est le rondeau des mains noires* is very much in Henri’s humorous vein: a mock serious poem on washing one’s hands. Charlot would also have received school classes in poetry and composition, and his reading in poetry was unusually wide and intense. I will be using Charlot’s poems primarily for their biographical content and will discuss them in themselves in chapter 4 *Poetry*.

Charlot’s earliest dated poem is from April 1912, although some poems and fragments are most probably older; for instance, *Le jour décline* is written on the verso of a sheet with a drawing dated 1911. By 1913, Charlot was writing so much poetry that his grandfather Louis could enter into a teasing competition with him in the field (note dated 1913): “Quant à mes vers je les trouve charmants et d’après cet échantillon, Jean ne m’arrive pas à la cheville. Attrape, mon vieux” ‘As to my verses, I find them charming, and in view of this example, Jean can’t even compete with me. Take that, old man.’ Charlot continued regularly to write poetry through the 1920s and occasionally after that. I will now discuss only that work that falls within the time frame of this chapter.

Charlot's earliest surviving poems are already sophisticated in meter and rime, a result of his two main influences: the Parnassians and the Decadents. In 1912, he began studying Théodore de Banville's *Petit Traité de Poésie Française*, which intensified his academic interest in poetic technique. As a result, many of the early poems make the impression of exercises rather than personal expressions. Many of the themes are taken from his sources—for example, *Léda* and *Pierrot sortant du cabaret*—as well as the pose of languid, refined ennui, as in the latter poem:

Qui pourrait adorer la Lune?
Elle n'a pas un sou de dot;
On n'adore que la fortune !

'Who could adore the Moon?
She hasn't got a penny for her dowry;
We adore only money!'

Happily, Charlot's humor cannot be entirely suppressed (*or c'était dans le parc classique*, 1913):

Diane la sage demoiselle
l'arc en main, courait, blanche et frêle,
un faune riait sur sa stèle.
"La nuit s'annonce au ciel vieux rose.
Quittons nos poses
académiques."

'Diana, the wise young lady,
bow in hand, ran, white and frail,
a faun laughed on his stele.
"Night announces itself with a sky the color of old roses.
Let us abandon our
academic poses."'

Moreover, Charlot's early works often do express his sentiments, even if in attenuated form. A fragmentary poem of November 1912 is one of the best examples of his decadent style with its overcharged lines and images of the vamp goddess and the victim poet, but it does express, not without humor, Charlot's dedication to his artistic vocation and his fear at the time of overly high ambitions and pride.

Je t'ai vu, je t'ai pu contempler ardemment
sous les brocards soyeux tordant ton corps agile
ondulant tes longs bras chargés de diamants
en la danse mystique, aux poses difficiles,
le col ployé sous la tiare orientale,
Houri de la cité d'opale.

Ses pieds lourds de bijoux écrasaient ma poitrine
Je me tordais comme un serpent. Ses bras nerveux
me prirent. Je baisais sa lèvre purpurine
ardemment. et je fus dévoré par le Feu.

Alors elle me dit, de sa voix idéale :
“Je t’ai choisi comme holocauste, ô, mon enfant,
afin que ton sang pourpre ensanglante les dalles
sous moi. Veux-tu mourir en de hideux tourments

Si tu le veux, dis-le,” et son timbre était doux
elle me regardait agonisant sous elle
je criais “Je le veux. Déesse qu’êtes-vous ?”
“Je suis celle qui mit à Pégase des ailes !”

‘I have seen you, I have been able to contemplate you ardently
under the silken brocades twisting your agile body
undulating your long arms covered with diamonds
in the mystical dance of difficult poses,
the neck bent under the oriental tiara
 houri of the opal city.

Her feet, heavy with jewels, crushed my chest
I writhed like a serpent. Her nervous arms
took me. I kissed her purpurin lip
ardently. And I was devoured by the Fire.

Then she said to me with her ideal voice:
“I have chosen you as a holocaust, O my child,
so that your purple blood stains the paving
beneath me. Do you want to die in hideous torments?

If you do, say it.” And her tone was soft
she watched me dying below her
I cried, “I desire it. Goddess, what are you?”
“I am she who gave Pegasus wings!”

In early July 1914—right before the trip to Freiburg during which his father would be fatally struck down by the beginning of World War I—Charlot wrote several poems that, without entirely separating themselves from their Decadent roots, are serious descriptions of his state of mind and his

cynical view of the social world: *tout m'énerve, ce soir, le bruit et le silence; là-bas peut-être est-ce ici; Fuis belle*; and *Philosophie*. The first is the most personal.

tout m'énerve, ce soir, le bruit et le silence
la lampe claire et le soir bleu,
mon âme fatiguée et lasse ne s'élance
plus là-haut et les spleens passent, à queue-leu-leu
que ne suis-je tranquille et simple. les pensers
subtils m'ont corrosé l'esprit,

.....
il faudrait je ne sais quelle pureté d'âme,
quelle candeur de vivre une sereine vie,
et quelle lèvre au front qui console et soutient,
telle qu'il n'en est pas dans ce monde, le mien,
car peut-être, là-bas, sont des cités de rêve
où l'homme, en achevant sa tâche, rit et lève
un regard frémissant d'Amour, là-haut, vers Dieu
et redressant sa taille à la splendeur des Cieux,
franc, secouant la sueur dont sa chair s'est polie,
plonge un regard profond et simple sur la vie.

Pour nous, la tâche faite et le devoir bâclé,
l'ennui terne agitant ironique ses clefs
de fer qui défendent l'approche des joies fraîches,
nous enfiévrans nos fronts au jeu de nos doigts rêches,
et notre âme alourdie et lasse se tapit
dans le rêve mauvais des romans impossibles,
chien crevé, dont le sang caille au bleu du tapis.

'everything gets on my nerves this evening, the noise, the silence
the clear lamp and the blue evening,
my tired, weary soul no longer soars
upwards, and the dumps pass by in single file.
Why am I not tranquil and simple? Subtle
thoughts have corroded my spirit,

.....
I don't know what purity of soul is needed,
what candor to live a serene life,
and what lip on my forehead that consoles and supports,
such as is not in the world of mine,
because maybe somewhere are the dream cities

where the man, on accomplishing his duty, smiles and raises
a look, trembling with Love, upwards, towards God,
and straightening himself at the splendor of the skies,
frank, shaking off the sweat that polishes his flesh,
takes a deep and simple look at life.

For us, the task done and the duty slipshod,
dull boredom shaking ironic its iron keys,
which guard against the approach of fresh joys,
we fever our brows with the play of our rough fingers,
and our soul, weighed down and weary, crouches
in the bad dream of impossible novels,
a beaten dog, whose blood clots at the carpet's blue.'

Many of these themes will become major in the next period of his poetry: the painful awareness of the difficulties that arise from the singularities of his talents, dreams, and character; the longing for a simpler way of thinking and living, preferably with a perfect wife; and the faith that God will ultimately provide the answers and satisfy his needs.

Charlot's poetry is an early indication of his lifelong interest in language. He learned several and was interested in the peculiar qualities of each. When he wrote them, he tried to take advantage of their special strengths, just as he did with various media of the visual arts. Similarly, working with several languages made him more sensitive to each. For instance, he emphasized the clarity of French. When, in the early 1950s, I was complaining about the difficulty of learning French, my father said, "At least you can understand it." On my asking what he meant, he explained that French makes points explicit that English leaves understood and thus potentially misleading. This characteristic made French the language of diplomacy, which demands the clearest, least ambiguous possible communication. Charlot felt that the Hawaiian writer Kepelino was able to exploit the advantages of his own language because he had learned several European ones. As with the visual arts, Charlot's sensitivity to language was visceral. I remember him in the early 1950s, while reading an English book on the forgeries of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, complaining how hard he found it to switch continually between the two languages. Charlot extended his interest to the curiosities of English spelling, explaining to me as a child the difference between *capital* and *Capitol*.

3.7.

CHRISTIANITY

Charlot was raised a French Roman Catholic and, except for his earnestness, would outwardly have seemed typical. He was baptized at the Parish St. Martin, in the tenth *arrondissement* in Paris, on April 28, 1898; his godparents were chosen from among his many uncles and aunts: Frédéric Eugène Caplain and Marie Hélène Palmieri. In May 1909, he received his first Holy Communion wearing the customary three-piece Eton suit with high collar and special arm sash and white pants instead of gray. He

attended Sunday Mass and other devotions. He identified himself as a Roman Catholic and—always aware of what was obligatory and what was voluntary—followed the Church’s teachings punctiliously.

However, Charlot’s family background was atypical with his half-Jewish, one-eighth Aztec mother and atheist, Mason father. As stated earlier, he felt that this helped his own Christianity:

Mother’s sweet proddings churchwise and father’s caustic, amused disapproval proved an unmatched combination for devotion. I could thus simultaneously obey and rebel, be docile and choose a path of my own. (*Born Catholics* 1954: 99)

Both parents collaborated in inculcating the basic morality a child learns in a good family.

Even more unusual was Charlot’s inner religious sensibility, which he felt began in the earliest period of his life and which is closest in type to primary religions. As described above, Charlot gave a Christian interpretation to his innate views and sensibilities and connected them to Christian practices; for instance, his emphasis on the physical world was satisfied in Christian sacramentalism. Charlot became completely comfortable with this unusual depth in his Christianity. As he studied religion, he realized and appreciated how many pre-Israelite and pre-Christian elements had been absorbed into his own faith. He, therefore, felt a kinship with all other religions, and in turn, some practitioners of primary religions felt a kinship with him. He saw this absorption as an ongoing process in Christianity—from pre-Christian, to Jewish, to Greek, to Roman, and so on to all the cultures that Christianity had reached. Christianity was an infinite truth that required all those contributions to reveal itself fully. Charlot studied the special character of Mexican Christianity and looked forward to the contributions of other cultures, like Hawaiian and Fijian. Ultimately, Charlot developed his own Christianity, orthodox but enriched through all his interests and contacts: “I think that religion is a way of emphasizing one’s personality rather than drowning it.”¹⁶⁴

Significantly, the one moment of conflict he felt in his life—his one crisis of faith—put Christianity to the question rather than his own religious sensibility: “a temptation that could have taken me out of the church.”¹⁶⁵ Charlot was attending Mass at Poissy. He guessed that he was ten years old at the time, but the fact that he was proudly holding his older cousin’s hand on the way to church suggests that he was younger. The priest went to the side of the sanctuary and removed his chasuble. To the young Charlot, he looked “ridiculous,” “unbearably grotesque”: “It seemed impossible that the doctrines that he embodied could hold an ounce of truth”; “How could a Faith represented by such a symbol have any truth in it?” Charlot felt like leaving the church and the Church for good.

Physically, the opposite happened. My elbows dug a little deeper into the arm-rest of the *prie-dieu* and my knees into its cushion. As swiftly as the vision and revulsion had come, they went and the matter of faith was settled...

The point at issue was the place of beauty in religion, essential in some primary religions and inessential in Christianity. Speaking of the dry tome on meditation that had been recommended to him, he stated, “I think I’ve always been very conscious of the form of things; that is the message for me really resides in the form, perhaps, more than in what is being said” (Interview October 5, 1970). All his life, Charlot would

fight for some recognition of the importance of good art for Christianity as opposed to the more patronized bad art that he found diabolical in the strict sense of the term: it distanced people from God.

Charlot had relevant personal contacts outside the immediate family. When very young he visited Léon Harmel, a relative by marriage, famous for his support of the progressive social teachings of Pope Leo XIII and for his paternal and extensive care of the workers in his factories (Guitton 1929). That tendency accorded well with Charlot's own views and those of Henri. But Charlot was struck more by Harmel's extreme Ultra-Montanism, his devotion to the papacy. Harmel had a collection of papal "treasures" that he kept in glass cases like a butterfly collection:

Every time a pope died, he tried to get some relic of a sort, or secondary relic, from the people who had made sure the pope was dead. One of the treasures was a little hammer, for example, with which the pope's forehead is hit as people tell him, "Are you dead? Are you dead?" in Latin, some such thing. But he had cotton, I remember, soaked in the blood of the popes and fragments from their shrouds and so on. And those things for me were, of course, much more frightening than edifying. But that gives you an idea of the kind of religion of a certain part of my family, very different from the religion that I myself was growing into. (Interview October 5, 1970)

Charlot's early religion can therefore be divided into periods. In his earliest childhood, his religion was basically pre-Christian, with his mother giving him a certain rudimentary Christianity and both parents teaching him a basic moral sense. Charlot himself saw that "that little book of secret gods is something that withered out as I grew up, even to childhood...I think there is definitely a cleft in there between my infancy and my childhood, so to speak" (Interview October 7, 1970). The conflict between his innate religious sensibility and Christianity was solved with a renewed adherence to the latter without giving up the former. His principal religious sources of Christian doctrine now would be professional teachers and books.

Charlot was naturally struck by those Christian teachings that were different from his own sensibility and from primary religions as well. He described his early Christian instruction in school:

I just got a regular religious training from the different schools, including what would be kindergarten school, that my parents put me in, and some of the things were rather puzzling to me...I remember very distinctly, again it was extremely early in my life, that we were under the supervision of a very nice lady in the Hattemer School, which was obviously for very young people. But she gave us religious classes, and I remember that she told us that, of course, sin was a very evil thing indeed. Mortal sin was very mortal, but that sin didn't depend on action, that you could commit very grievous sins without doing anything active. So I just sat on my little chair, and I tried to commit grievous sins. I didn't know how, and I got out of it some impression of the mystery, of the mysteriousness of sin, that has stayed with me all my life. That is certainly something that became part of my religious training. (Interview October 5, 1970)

Similarly, the special teachings of Catholicism had to be mastered:

We did, our first communion was done very early. I think we were eleven or twelve years old, but before the first communion there was a little examination, and the priest who gave me my examination told me that, what would you do if you had an interview with the pope, and you spoke with the pope, and you spoke about religion and so on, and you disagreed? What would be your position? And the pope reproved you and said that it wasn't so? So I wanted to get in good with that priest that I liked very much and knew very well, because I wanted to have my first communion, and I said, "Oh, I would agree with the pope." And he said, "No, not at all. You don't have to agree with the pope. When you are in a personal conversation with him, you can hold your own because infallibility would come in certain things, *urbi* and *orbi*, and so on." And he reproved me for being so boneless.¹⁶⁶

Charlot states: "It was the first, and probably the last, time that I ever fawned on the clergy" (*Born Catholics* 1954: 100).

Charlot always remembered with affection and appreciation the first priests who taught him.¹⁶⁷ First, they were genuinely friendly: "[they] managed...to live on a most democratic footing with even the bookish and proud brat that I was then. They were my friends in spite of the difference in age..." (Summer 1951). They also had "the grain of Gallicanism in their make-up" (*Born Catholics* 1954: 100); that is, in the Church of the time, they represented a certain French independence from Rome as opposed to the Ultra-Montane party that advocated an extreme dependence on the Vatican. Charlot agreed with the Gallicans that the French church should have its own saints in the liturgical calendar rather than ones imposed by Rome.¹⁶⁸ In fact, he always retained some specifically French Catholic elements in his religion. For instance, he had a particular devotion to Saint Ann, the mother of Mary, a saint neglected in the Americas but emphasized in France and Belgium and often depicted in medieval art, for instance the Portal of Saint Ann on Notre-Dame in Paris.

This independence of mind also emphasized the central role of conscience as opposed to blind obedience to church authorities, a tenet that became a principle of Charlot's Christianity. That tenet was consonant with a typical French anticlericalism that Charlot recognized had developed in him over the years:

there may be in me—some people, Wolfe, for example, in his life of Rivera, says that I have a strain of being anticlerical. Maybe there is in me something of that type because of things that happened to me with people, shall we say, in clerical costume.
(Interview November 6, 1970)

But the main personal impression Charlot's early priestly teachers left with him was of their common humanity ("Early Text of 'Apologia'"): "My personal contact with the Parisian clergy removed me forever from considering priests either as black-robed hypocrites or living buddhas."

The greatest intellectual impression made by the Paris priests was “the French lucidity of their introduction to dogma,” their “Gallic ratiocination” (Summer 1951); they “had lucid heads, good enough for the Sorbonne of St. Thomas” (*Born Catholics* 1954: 100). Furthermore:

This first training opened to my reasoning powers and analytical mind the field of religion as other teachers had introduced them to mathematics or geometry, and my Parisian prayers were tintured with a cold and clear investigation not unlike that attendant on scientific experiment. ~~The brain seemed the best instrument of prayer.~~ (Summer 1951)

Charlot’s description and his later references to St. Thomas Aquinas place the priests within the Thomist revival of the time, an effort to create a strong and modern intellectual argument for and articulation of Christianity on the foundation of the writings of that greatest of medieval scholastic philosopher-theologians. Charlot would continue to study Thomism during the next years, writing an undated note on modern Thomistic versions of proofs of the existence of God (“Preuves de l’existence de Dieu”). In his lecture “Nous les Jeunes !” of November 1916, he quotes Thomas Aquinas on the relation of faith to reason, and Aquinas represents theology in Charlot’s unrealized *La Théologie Régulatrice des Arts*, on which he worked from 1919 to 1921. Among the books to be taken with him into the Occupation was Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier’s standard, modernizing course of Thomistic philosophy, *Cours de philosophie*, first published 1892–1899. While in France, Charlot read the brilliant young Thomist Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) and remembered especially his book on art, *Art et Scolastique*.¹⁶⁹ But Charlot sensed a distance between Maritain’s world and his own that was confirmed when he became a friend of Maritain and his wife Raïssa (1883–1960) in New York City in the 1930s:

I thought it was nice of a fellow who obviously had no, well, easy sensuous approach to things to try and imagine what the artist who lives within that sensuous area of concepts, which is not the same as brain concepts, was after...I didn’t know Maritain at the time. Later on, of course, when I knew him better, I realized that the image I had of him through the book was absolutely exact, that the man was an ascete, an ascetic, and had really an absolute minimum of interest in the senses...So [for] Maritain, anything that connects with art, does it because it is so difficult for him to know what it’s about, because he doesn’t have the wherewithals inside himself to know what those sensuous guys are about, and so there is a curiosity to look into that other world. It’s a little bit the same curiosity with which I tried to get into his world, let’s call it Thomism, if you want, but of course, I don’t find there the things that are of my interest, and I am sorry to say, I rarely finished a book of his, much as I love him as a person. (Interview October 10, 1970)

Charlot would gradually lose interest in abstract speculations on religion, leaving them to philosophers and theologians. But, like many Catholics, he was happy in the conviction that there was an intellectual justification for his faith and that it was not purely a question of prejudice or emotion: “du sentiment

religieux solidement appuyé par la logique” ‘religious sentiment solidly supported by logic’ (“Nous les Jeunes !”). Charlot could also use scholastic methods when approaching a problem:

I will use an approach to the subject that was set up long ago by St. Thomas Aquinas, in which he states that one must state first that which is contrary to what one wants to prove. That is, I will not say what I think, not things as I would like them to be, but first the contrary point of view. We should refer first to what critics think about artists and what artists think about critics. (September 1947)

In the extended reading on religion that he began early and continued through his life in France, Charlot preferred works that communicated emotion along with reasoning. He read the catechism and technical manuals on mysticism, but was drawn more toward the writings of the mystics themselves. Most important, Charlot began reading three contemporary French authors who were addressing many of the problems Charlot himself was facing. As with artistic influences, Charlot did not become a follower of any thinker, and his own views often differed strongly from the authors he prized; he states accurately that they “helped me to a realization of my personal attitude...” (*Born Catholics* 1954: 101).

Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907) was the first to attract the young Charlot with his sophistication and rarefied estheticism expressed in an elaborated style in which many obsolete French words were revived:

thanks to the spice of unusual words, I could read more or less all the books of Huysmans with great interest, and it went all the way from his early days that he called irreligious, where he represented himself as a most sophisticated fellow, through his tries at demonism and Black Masses, through his conversion. In fact, he has pursued me up to my later life because one of the books that I was most interested in was *L'Oblat, The Oblate*. At the time I didn't have the least idea what an *oblat* was, but I enjoyed the book, and later on in life, I myself became a Benedictine oblate. (Interview October 6, 1970)

Indeed, both Huysmans and Charlot were buried in the habit of a Benedictine oblate.¹⁷⁰ With his unconventional tastes, Huysmans was also a guide for Charlot in art. Charlot appreciated the fact that “as an art critic,” Huysmans: “wrote some very interesting early reviews on people like Grünewald, for example, and Cézanne; he has one of the earliest intelligent reviews of paintings by Cézanne.”¹⁷¹ Moreover, Huysmans admired Grünewald in terms that Charlot could appreciate: his crucified figure was not the pretty Jesus of the rich but the Christ of the poor. Because of Huysmans’ difficult style and challenging taste, “the makeup of the man was a little closer to my own makeup than my pious friends” (Interview October 5, 1970).

Huysmans was a champion of the liturgical movement of the time and argued strongly for the importance of the artist in the Church:

Il a été l'auxiliaire le plus sûr de la mystique et de la liturgie, pendant le Moyen-Age; il a été le fils aimé de l'Eglise, son truchement, celui qu'Elle chargeait d'exprimer ses

pensées, de les exposer dans des livres, sur des porches de cathédrales, dans des retables, aux masses.¹⁷²

‘He was the surest aid to mysticism and liturgy during the Middle Ages. He was the beloved son of the Church, its spokesman, the man She charged with expressing her ideas, of displaying them in books, on the porches of cathedrals, in the retables, to the masses.’

The Church has been weakened by its neglect of art: “Elle a perdu son meilleur mode de propagande...” ‘She has lost her best mode of propaganda...’. Huysmans made an intense study of the history of church art, iconography, and symbolism (of architecture, numbers, metals, liturgical accessories, odors, animals, bells, dance, soul, body, and colors), which he related to modern symbolist movements.¹⁷³ He idealized the Middle Ages as the high point of religious art, which he felt had declined since the Renaissance, in many ways due to the degeneration of taste in its clerical patrons. Huysmans’ anticlericalism found justification in the widespread official patronage of wretched devotional art in his own time, which he found “diabolical,”¹⁷⁴ an opinion Charlot echoed with the very same word. Charlot was definitely a younger participant in the same liturgical movement. Huysmans was more churchy than Charlot, more interested in the minutiae of ritual and calendar. But Charlot did follow the liturgical year in his Missal and appreciated correctness. In the 1960s, he donated a set of rose vestments, which are seldom required, to his parish because he was bothered by the priests’ using the nearest color instead. Moreover, Huysmans introduced Charlot to the works of many of the mystics he would read extensively: St. Hildegarde, St. Lydwine, and Anne-Catherine Emmerich.¹⁷⁵

Huysmans was highly critical of the contemporary Church. Its established, organized character obscured the power of Christianity (Calvet 1931: 65 f.). Catholic education had become defensive, isolated, prudish, repressive, and uncreative (n.d., *La Cathédrale*: 244–250). Rather than bravely facing and participating in the modern world, the Church, to its discredit, was cutting itself off from the development of contemporary culture. Huysmans was participating in an admirable resurgence of Catholic literature—which included arguably the best poet and dramatist of the age, Paul Claudel—but he longed for an equally valuable movement in the arts; the need was felt and the will was strong, but the artists were missing. Huysmans supported Dom Jean-Martial-Léon Besse (1861–1920), who was dynamically encouraging young people to restore churches and produce art (Baldick 1955: 218 ff., 295); Charlot would show Besse his work, probably in 1916. Huysmans placed his hopes at various times in different artists, but by the time he died in 1907, all he could see was the worst of devotional church art and well-intentioned but unsuccessful attempts at better liturgical art.¹⁷⁶ Huysmans was too much of an artist himself to accept either literature or art as good because it was produced by a Catholic (*A Rebours* 1929: 203). Similarly, the members of La Gilde wanted to produce uncompromisingly authentic works of art that would be truly modern, but also appropriate to their liturgical purpose.

Huysmans had many other ideas that Charlot could find congenial: his appreciation of Gallicanism, his interest in the *Images d’Epinal*, and—in this similar to Bloy—his opposition to the capitalist bourgeoisie.¹⁷⁷ More curiously, Huysmans had returned to Catholicism from a period of

experimentation with diabolism—a fashion at the time—which he narrated in *A Rebours* and discussed in *Là-Bas*. Charlot knew Huysmans' writings on the subject, but found them bookish and “high class”; for Charlot, the experiences of the mystic he met later, Mademoiselle Marchais, seemed more real. Charlot himself would have a brush of his own with diabolism and psychic experiences.

Charlot felt he finally outgrew Huysmans and wrote of him more harshly than usual in 1954:

he disguised with a sauce of obscure adjectives the clear taste of clichés. It was not long before an aestheticism so thick repulsed the maker of art in me, the joiner of art, so rarely troubled by the mental scruples of the art appreciator. (*Born Catholics* 1954: 102)

By the time of our interviews in 1970, Charlot had returned to a more positive view of Huysmans and his influence on himself.

Huysmans was one of the many *bêtes noires* of Charlot's second, favorite author, Léon Bloy (1846–1917):

I was looking very intensely in my teens for the books of Léon Bloy, and I made a fairly good collection. In fact probably now it would be a very valuable collection of first editions of Bloy. I still have two or three of those books with me. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Shooting from both the right and the left with his angry humor and blistering polemic, Bloy challenged his many admirers—including Huysmans and the Maritains—to choose among his many targets to concur or contend with him. Charlot penetrated the plethora of Bloy's peeves: “At the heart of the matter there remains the fact that Bloy was in love with sanctity” (*Born Catholics* 1954: 102). Measured against the standards of Christianity, the complications of modern society reduced themselves to stark alternatives of good and evil:

I adopted Bloy's concept of society in all its crude black-and-white, homemade theology, as angular as were the block books and pilgrims' penny sheets of the Middle Ages. (*Born Catholics* 1954: 103)

Principally, Bloy reinforced Charlot's commitment to the poor and powerless against the rich and strong:

I think that I'm rather right-wing than left-wing, but anyhow... Well, I have two sets of ideas. One of them is social. The other one I inherited from people like Léon Bloy, I suppose, who didn't like rich people, and I suppose I don't specially like rich people. At least they have to prove themselves before I like them, and I have not the same difficulty with the poor people. I sort of like them direct. (Interview November 18, 1970)

After the social views of his father Henri, Charlot mentioned: “the Catholic writers that I loved. For example, Léon Bloy, whose relation to the poor is a very important element in my own religious

makeup.”¹⁷⁸ Because the organized church was so often on the wrong side, Charlot could enjoy Bloy’s eloquent anticlericalism:

Something like *The Last Columns of the Church*, for example, in which he takes to task all the people who were most respected and respectable in the Catholic Church of his day. So it has made me grow up in the church but a little bit sidewise and with a sense of, well, a critical sense, not in the sense that I was looking for anything to be critical about, but a critical sense about some “Columns of the Church,” to use the term that Léon Bloy uses. (Interview October 5, 1970)

More generally, Charlot relished Bloy’s spirit of resistance, his perpetual discontent, his refusal to adapt—his constant maintenance of his critical stance. The rich language and aggressive rhetoric of Charlot’s French essays owe much to Bloy.

Both Charlot and Diego Rivera were reminded of Bloy by José Clemente Orozco:

The faith of Orozco was never meant to be soothing or comforting. With him, it is rather a means to enlarge the human drama to God’s scale, which is after all one of the cogent reasons that theologians advance for the Passion. One finds a similar climate in the Catholicism of French writer Léon Bloy, who could impale his victims on hot words as dexterously as any devil damned on a cherry-red fork. If Bloy is remembered today, it is because his constructive contribution so immeasurably transcended his destructive jags. In the same way, if Orozco were only a scoffer and a debunker, his criticism would lead to anarchy, an old-fashioned bomb at that, scattering its small shot harmlessly because of a too expansive radius. But both Bloy and Orozco are blessed with a private vision of Beauty, jealously kept to themselves, that makes them all the more muscularly dust and scour their universe of every speck that falls short of an ever throbbing ideal.¹⁷⁹

Paul Claudel, a major influence on Charlot’s poetry, offered him also the example of a great artist who was a committed Christian despite all the problems that entailed:

when I was in my teens, I was what people call *Claudélien*. I had a great admiration for Claudel. I had read and reread things like the *Processionnal*, and of course the Catholic in Claudel in the *Feuilles de Saints*, for example, appealed to me. I mentioned how we were looking for Catholic artists. By artists I meant painters at the time—Maurice Denis and so on. And of course Claudel as a Catholic poet helped round up the picture for me as a young fellow who was trying to express myself, meaning my Catholic angle in art.¹⁸⁰

Charlot felt that Claudel’s monumentality and peasant forcefulness influenced his own visual work: “There was bigness in that grossness, and Claudel’s *ProceSSIONAL* [*sic*] taught me a decisive lesson in mural composition, as generous and lasting as a visit to Assisi” (*Born Catholics* 1954: 102). Charlot would meet Claudel in 1928 and work closely with him on the illustrations of *The Book of Christopher Columbus* and

the unpublished illustrations of *A travers les Vitraux de l'Apocalypse*; Charlot felt very privileged to meet and work with someone who had long been one of his idols, and I will discuss their relationship in detail in a later chapter. Charlot felt Claudel was closer to Bloy than is usually recognized:

[Claudel] was terribly impatient with the world. I mentioned that single little thing that he went to very early Masses because he tried to escape the preach. That is something, of course, you find that in Bloy, who just always comes back home and writes in his journal how bad, how ridiculous, how vulgar the preach was, how devilish the preach was... [Claudel's criticism of famous writers and intellectuals expressed by Charlot in the illustrations of the *Apocalypse*] was, of course, a holy wrath, just like Bloy speaking of the *Last Columns of the Church* was an act of holy wrath. But it is, of course, also an act of disrespect for men who were very good in their own professions, so to speak. Now, behind Bloy, there was always the idea that the rich—of course he based himself on the Gospels—the rich would go to Hell, so that he treated those people as damned. With Claudel it wasn't the rich that were his aim, because he was himself rather wealthy and all his friends were rather wealthy, but it was the intellectuals and more specially the *littérateurs*, the people who would, as he said, "*faire de la littérature*," that is, fabricate literature. They were the people that really made him very, very angry... Claudel was extremely impatient with what people at large would have called his colleagues, that is, the other writers. He was as impatient with them as Bloy was with the rich man. (Interview November 25, 1970)

The philosopher Jacques Maritain, usually obtuse in artistic matters other than theoretical, saw the relationship immediately:

I showed Maritain some of the drawings for the *Apocalypse*, and what interested him most is that he saw in them a strain of Léon Bloy. Of course, Maritain was very close in memory to Léon Bloy and respected and revered him as his spiritual father, so to speak. And I was interested of his own analysis of my drawing. He said, "Maybe you think it's Claudel, but I think myself it's a blend of Claudel and Léon Bloy." And I hadn't told him, of course, that I had read and admired Léon Bloy. But I think he was right. (Interview November 28, 1970)

Charlot's work with Claudel left him mainly with an impression of their differences in style and opinion, but as a teenager in France, there were many elements besides artistry that he could relate to in Claudel's work: treating Biblical stories naturalistically, emphasizing the physicality of the sacraments, and creating genuine works of art intended for popular devotion.

Beyond these individual great authors, Charlot was exposed to the standard right-wing, defensive Catholic intellectual polemic of the time, which he follows in his first published article (1917–1918) "Nous les Jeunes !," first given as a conference at *La Gilde* in November 1916. The nineteenth century faith in science and rationalism with its philosophical systems (Renan, Taine, Anatole France) has failed, leaving only uncertainty, and the subsequent cult of the self has offered no solid and lasting

foundation. As a result, faith was reevaluated, the Church was seen as an interesting moral institution, dogmas as bases for action, and religion as an incomparable artistic subject. People were drawn to the Church first for such utilitarian reasons, but some became “de vrais chrétiens, ‘des chrétiens d’âme’” ‘true Christians, “Christians of the soul.”’ Huysmans is a good example. The world recovered “la foi parfaite, l’ordre, la vie” ‘perfect faith, order, life.’ The authors Charlot uses are Maurice Barrès and Henri Bergson secondhand, but such ideas were conventional in Catholic circles.¹⁸¹ These ideas were still informing Claudel’s thinking when he and Charlot were working on *A travers les Vitraux de l’Apocalypse* in the 1930s, but Charlot felt he had moved beyond them by then. In fact I was still hearing this polemic from clerics in my own youth.

Besides the Bible and contemporary Catholic books, Charlot was reading extensively in .^{182a} literature. Charlot felt that his own mother had religious experiences: “Now she never pretended that those things were supernatural, but they came in, and they were part of her life and counted in her life as much as the everyday episodes” (Interview October 5, 1970). Moreover, a growing opinion of the time—promoted by Jacques Maritain and his wife, Raïssa, among others¹⁸³—was that mystical experiences were not the privilege of a devotional élite, but were open to all believers. Mysticism is indeed a logical and natural consequence of Christian teachings. For Charlot as for many Catholics of the time, mysticism provided a high model of the Christian life: a spectrum of degrees of religious intensity or intimacy with God, from a passive, conventional acceptance of teachings and fulfillment of obligations to a personal union with God beyond all ordinary experience in this world. The religious life was an emotional as well as a faithful relationship with God and as such was open to such impressions as closeness and distance, connection and alienation; “consolations” and “desolations” in theological parlance. Mystical experiences ranged from normal emotions during prayer to hearing voices and seeing visions to non-sensual states of rapture. The individual Catholic was guided in this relationship with God by spiritual directors—usually clerics—manuals of mysticism—often very technical—and the writings of mystics themselves. Those writings themselves display a range that corresponds to the variegated personalities of their authors and their experiences. Charlot was thus not being eccentric in his mystical interests, and the books he read were usually classics, such as the writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, one of his favorite poets. Charlot would recite his poem *En una Noche Oscura* and focus on the line *Amada en amado transformada* ‘The female lover [the devotee] is transformed into the male lover [God].’ He objected correctly to an English translation that had the two “intermingled.” Toward the end of his life, Charlot created a statue based on John’s vision of the crucified Christ flying over the world.

Nonetheless, in his teens, the esoteric or even exotic quality of mysticism seems to have been part of its attraction for Charlot. In discussing the contrast of complication and simplicity in religion, art, and literature, he stated:

in other authors, I had found a spirituality linked with enormous complexity, and in Jammes, it was linked with simplicity...I was a little more of a mix-up, and perhaps some of the more obscure mystics pleased me more. Again, I had dug out of Huysmans a mention of St. Hildegard, and he was describing how she had had a vision of Paradise in which the angels served food, a description of food and the

plates and so on, and I decided to get the text of the visions, and I found that they had been published in French not long before, and when I had a little money, I would go and buy myself one of those little *in octavo* volumes and read it while I was walking around, I remember, even in the subway, and in a way meditating on the text of Hildegard. They were obscure, but maybe the very obscurity pleased me and allowed me to add my own imagination to the imagination of the saint. On the other hand, I admire simplicity, maybe because it isn't exactly my dominant feature, and I think that in the visual arts as a painter if I express, if I like to express something, it is a sort of simplicity. It is arrived at, not through simple ways, but I get there eventually. (Interview October 5, 1970)

Charlot went about his study of mysticism in his characteristically thorough and scholarly way. He accepted a spiritual director and read a large technical tome on mysticism that did not involve him emotionally:

I don't know if it was by Tanquerrey. I think the man had had later on—I learned that he had had a little trouble with the higher ups and that for a while his book was teetering on the brink of the Index, but somehow it didn't happen, and I realized, of course, that my director was a rather bolder man than I had thought he was. (Interview October 5, 1970)

Charlot became much more interested in reading the mystics themselves, and a passage from an interview provides a picture of his selections and interests:

Now there is somewhere a footnote, I think, in Huysmans, or else I read it in a magazine, that *The Visions of St. Lydwine* had been published, and so I went—there was the address; it was somewhere on the Quai, I think. So I was extremely young and had very little money, but I would go there. And it was published, I think, in five volumes or so, and I couldn't buy the five volumes, and the gentleman who was the publisher, even though he was the man who received the clients—obviously it was a small publishing firm—understood and was nice enough to sell me whatever volume I wanted, for which I was very grateful. And then, I did read, not the whole thing, I think—I never bought all the volumes—but all I could of it, as I was, for example, in the subway going from one place to another and so on. And I think she *has* been quite an influence maybe even on the, well, shall we say climate of my devotion...she has interesting things about Heaven that are quite physical. She has, for example, the actual, if I remember rightly, menu of the dinners that are given by the Holy Trinity, and the shape and color of the plates, and so on. She and that other girl, the German girl, Emmerich, both have a very physical approach to mysticism, and that's the only thing I could understand, because when you get into metaphysics, I can't follow. (Interview June 12, 1971)

Charlot's favorite among these mystical writers was Anne-Catherine Emmerich, who was also prized by Huysmans, Bloy, and the Maritains. Charlot was influenced in his art by the visual character and the peasant naturalness of her visions of sacred persons and events, so similar to the medieval stories in *The Golden Legend*, long an inspiration to other artists as well as Charlot. In a long passage, he states clearly what interested him in Emmerich and other visionaries:

I was wholly taken by her because of her...the visions being visual. There's quite a number of visionaries who have visions that are nearly metaphysical, or there are visionaries who have visions that they cannot express in words. They just speak of resplendent lights and so on. St. Teresa of Avila has such things: where the Holy Spirit appears, she says that it simply was dazzling, or something like that. But Anne-Catherine had simple visions where the light was the natural light of the day, where the people were clothed in their everyday clothes and went through the motions of everyday tasks, usually about holy people. And my little repertory of pictures of the Holy Family—especially, I would say the *Flight into Egypt*, the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, and so on—is very much an illustration of the texts of Anne-Catherine Emmerich. She knew all about, oh, the kind of mount, for example, that Joseph had when they went into Egypt and where they found the water to drink. And the old stories—which is rather interesting—the *Apocrypha* stories: for example, the fig tree that Joseph finds, which was one of the preferred medieval stories because Joseph was represented as a small man, and the figs were too high, and the tree bent so that he could pick the fruits. All those things that are apocryphal by rational standards are to be found in Anne-Catherine and many more that nobody knew about, and they are wonderful things for painting or for sculpturing. That Joseph and the fig tree, for example, was done all through the Middle Ages, and I myself have a few pictures with the same subject. She was really a painter's visionary because she, her genius, was visual, and the things that she said could be represented with line, form, and color, which is more than many visionaries. I think that the exasperation of visionaries who cannot tell of their visions is exemplified by St. Paul. He gets into the Heavens, and he says that there are sights that no one has seen and so on and so forth, but he doesn't say what they are. Maybe there are no words to describe them, but it is just as if he had no vision at all, as far as a painter is concerned. So the very humility, if you want, of the range of visions of Anne-Catherine Emmerich makes it available to the visual artist. (Interview October 5, 1970)

He had earlier made the same point:

that reality, if you want, and that closeness of the sacred personages—that they are our neighbors—is of course something that I tried to suggest very much in my pictures. More exactly, I didn't try it, it just happened to be so. I remember the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*; I've done many of those, and in some of them, Mary has been washing the diapers of the Child, and Joseph is hanging the diapers to dry, and

so on. Those things are very similar to the simplicity of Anne-Catherine Emmerich when she spoke of the sacred personages. (Interview September 21, 1970)

Charlot depicted the scene in his poem *Je te veux chanter Marie* of October 9, 1919, in which the Holy Family is portrayed “Comme gens de pauvre mine” ‘poor-looking people’:

Une troupellette d’anges
D’amour divin attiré
Luttent pour laver les langes
‘A little troop of angels
Drawn by divine love,
Compete to wash the diapers.’

Charlot’s vivid description of the flagellation of Christ in his *Second mystère : Flagellation* of 1922 is based on Emmerich: “Ainsi te vit Anne-Cathérine” ‘Thus Anne-Catherine saw you.’ Similarly, in *La Visite* of February 11, 1918, Mary provides a lesson in humility:

Marie a voulu là, des mois, comme servante,
Cuisiner les repas et surveiller les ventes,
nous enseignant le prix du travail manuel.
‘Mary wanted to work there for months as a servant
Cooking the meals and minding the shop,
teaching us the value of manual work.’

This emphasis on the ordinary humanity of the Holy Family countered the mainstream Catholic tendency to dogmatic glorification. For instance, in the 1960s, the popular theologian Frank Sheed was arguing that since Mary was conceived without Original Sin, she would not have suffered labor pains with Jesus. Moreover, Jesus probably did not pass through Mary’s vagina physically, because he would have had to break the hymen, since she was a virgin. My father asked him what he would say to all the women in labor who had derived comfort from the thought that Mary had suffered the same pains. Charlot describes the birth of Jesus as a human experience in *Je te veux chanter Marie*:

Marie la pauvre fille
De souffrir ne peut bouger
‘Mary, the poor young woman,
Can’t move for suffering...’

Similarly, Mary really did suffer emotionally at the Crucifixion. Charlot’s woodcut series *Chemin de Croix* will express how important that suffering was to him. Charlot continued to study Emmerich during his years in Mexico (Volume 2, Chapter 5).

Charlot seems to have been interested in only one mystic whose experiences were not primarily visual. He learned about Thérèse de Lisieux,¹⁸⁴ even before she was beatified in 1923, through Mademoiselle Marchais, who was one of a number of poor people who were pushing the eventually successful cause of canonization. Curiously, one of Charlot’s teachers, an old painter named Blanchard,

had made illustrations for the first edition of Thérèse's autobiography—he had been “heartbroken” when Thérèse's older sister had retouched them to make them prettier, just as she did with the photographs of Thérèse. Blanchard told Charlot one of the experiences he had had while doing his work:

he told me, and we were right in the room where it had happened, that one day he tried to get a better idea of what she was like, and he had put his, well, it was a canvas at the time, a little canvas on his easel, and he was thinking on how to represent her so that it would look like her. And he had been thinking a longish time, and light was falling, and in the dusk, there was a very light glow on the white canvas, and the portrait of Thérèse drew itself, so to speak—of course, not permanently—but for a moment, he saw very distinctly that portrait in that faint glow on the canvas. And so he did the portrait according to what he had seen, and I think it is one of those things that the good sister retouched. (Interview October 10, 1970)

Charlot could not admire Thérèse's devotional artwork: “Maybe she is one of the few people who inspired me without making images, I would say.” Yet he could recognize in it an important quality:

What humble pride she may have felt in her artistic achievements cannot be shared by any conscientious art critics. Yet, the scrolls, and hearts, and lambs that she lovingly limned must have been pleasing to God...have we kept in the church a place for innocence in art as God has kept a place for His innocents in Heaven? (*AA* I: 255)

Charlot found this quality in other artists, such as Stefan Lochner, Manuel Martínez Pintao, and Louis Eilshemius; he found it even in Ingres and Courbet: “taste is rather in inverse ratio to greatness. Whistler had good taste. But the very great have great innocence...” (*AA* I: 179). Charlot continued his devotion to Thérèse de Lisieux all his life.¹⁸⁵

Charlot was always critical of “book knowledge,” and his encounter with a living mystic proved “one of the biggest influences outside of regular book learning”; “a very important experience” (Interview October 5, 1970). Sometime before 1914, he joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which was very active in recruiting young parishioners, and was sent with a little money to visit poor people.¹⁸⁶ He was assigned to an old woman in poor health, Mademoiselle Marchais, a former charwoman living very poorly in a high attic. Mademoiselle Marchais was a mystic like those Charlot was reading about in Huysmans and in original mystical writings:

Mademoiselle Marchais was in a continuous state, we could say, of meditation. She had day after day, I mean her usual way was a way in which she had visions and knowledge of spirits and so on...She would go to daily Communion—I think that was a little unusual at the time—and had continuous visions of, for example, the Devil with horns and hooves, and so on, and dreams that I had read of about the saints, which interested me because of the proving, if you want, in practical life of things that for me had been simply literary exercises. For example, she had the dream which is a classic with saints in which her body was on an altar in a sort of reliquary and the

people were praying to her and so on. She was nice. She saw I was simple enough and of good will enough so that she could open up a little bit to me, and it was for me a great proof of the reality of the mystical experience. (Interview October 5, 1970)

Mademoiselle Marchais was what we could call a total mystic. She had a number of gifts. One of them, I think, was a sort of a bilocation in the sense that she could find herself, shall we say, in places where she was not. (Interview October 10, 1970)

One of Mademoiselle Marchais' missions was to pray for people involved in diabolism, especially for a certain group around a priest. She herself had direct experiences of the devil:

she herself was really a saint of the Middle Ages in the sense that all the business of spirits, rather bad than good in her case, I would say, were very present to her. She would go to Mass in the morning and receive communion, and then the Devil would come to her. That was right in the streets, of course, when she was going home. And he had, from what she said, horns and hooves and, I think, even a tail and would make all sorts of obscene gestures and try to bother her in her post-communion meditation and so on. (Interview October 10, 1970)

Her experiences seemed more real to Charlot than the more literary descriptions of Huysmans. Charlot had a strong sense of evil and did believe in the existence of the devil. The devil's activities in the world mirrored in reverse the miracles of God. Charlot did not, however, always agree with the majority opinion on identifying the devilish. For instance, he thought there might have been some minor devil work at Salem, but found "really diabolical" the action of one of the pillars of the church community: when a man who refused to plead was being pressed to death, the supposedly good man used his cane to push the unfortunate's protruding tongue back into his mouth.

Moreover, observing mystical experiences in real life made them seem more natural and less exotic. Of course, for a believing Catholic, Mademoiselle Marchais' mysticism was not abnormal:

I was really so young, and I had really so little experience that it didn't astonish me. I didn't consider there was anything unusual in Mademoiselle Marchais' visions or experiences...

He once wrote jokingly: "I am in fact within the limits set by the church a fundamentalist, the whale of Jonah, the apple of Eve, the sun of Joshua do not make me bat an eyelash of doubt" (Summer 1951). A less provocative description of his attitude would be that he believed in the miraculous and did not feel the need to provide naturalistic explanations for extraordinary events. Charlot never lost the rationalistic tendency he learned from his priest-teachers, but for a believer, there is nothing irrational in miracles: God is more powerful than the laws of nature. Mademoiselle Marchais, he wrote, was one of the two uncanonized saints he had met in his life (Summer 1951). The miraculous was not unexpected in them, but it did cause him to assimilate what he learned from them into his worldview:

In both of them, holiness had performed tricks with the material laws which proved it a superior force to the bounds of space and the law of gravity. Having known the

spiritual to outweigh the material makes me treat it, even in this world, as a matter-of-fact reality.

Although it was not a major question for him, Charlot puzzled occasionally over the problems mysticism posed for conventional theology: for instance, how could prophecy be reconciled with free will?

Mademoiselle Marchais would be the first of several older women to influence Charlot's religion: Juana Manuela, the mother of Luz Jiménez in Milpa Alta, Mexico; Agnes Meyer in Washington D.C.; and Jennie Wilson in Hawai'i.

Mysticism was not, however, a merely intellectual subject for Charlot, and his poetry witnesses to the generally emotional character of his Christianity at that time. He also made a concentrated effort to follow a mystical path in his religious life, meditating in churches he found to be "harbors," providing a "cool, somewhat austere setting, helpful to concentration" (Summer 1951). Even the liturgical participation of the time was modeled on private prayer: one followed the Latin text of the Mass silently in one's Missal (Interview October 7, 1970). When I asked him whether he had had mystical experiences, he replied:

Well, I suppose there are all degrees. If a sort of meditative mood would be an experience, I suppose in prayer one gets into a meditative mood, but I was rather stupid about it. When I was again very young, maybe sixteen or so, I read a very big book which was based, I think, on Teresa of Avila, *The Castles of the Soul*. So that you got into the first castle, the second castle, the third castle, and so on, until the tiptop of mystical visions. And I would go through the first castle, and then after two weeks or so I was a little tired of it, and I decided I'd enter the second castle of the soul, and so on. Then, after I think four castles, I found it was all of my own doing, and that nothing specially happened to make me a better man, so that since then, I really worked out just with prayer and the regular run of devotions, rosary and so on, and devotion to the saints, and that has been sufficient for my sort of devotion. So I certainly cannot consider myself mystical in any way. If I had to describe my brand of religion, I would say that I'm a parishioner. (Interview October 10, 1970)

Charlot's experience with St. Teresa's writings was a critical point in Charlot's religious life. His final religious position to which he alludes in the above quotation was the result of a development that lasted through the middle 1920s and involved his view of his vocation as a human being and an artist in the world. Charlot felt that Claudel had gone through the same development:

He had to hang on something physical, something material. And that way, of course, I am sure, he made his salvation and became a deeply religious man. We spoke from time to time of things like meditation. I think we both attempted and failed to be mystical in that sense. (Interview November 28, 1970)

Although Charlot denied being a mystic, mystics clearly felt comfortable with him and were even drawn to him:

I think all through my life for some—I don't see any reason to it—but I have known people who had actual visions of spirits and so on. I'd never had myself anything like that, but anyhow the world of the spirits is for me one that people experience.
(Interview October 10, 1970)

Charlot's belief in spirits—consistent with his earliest thoughts and feelings as well as with Christianity—would later provide a bond of sympathy and understanding with Mexican Indians and Pacific Islanders, whose own experiences so often resemble those classified as mystical in the West.

Curiously, the one abnormal experience of his youth that Charlot described—"a very frightening experience" (Interview October 10, 1970)—was not necessarily religious. Charlot and a group of friends—including Odette, who told me the same story—had read about turning tables, a fashionable psychic practice:¹⁸⁷ people sit around a table, place their hands on it, and try to make it move. It started as a game, but ended badly:

we were a group of people, and we did what was supposed to be done. We put our hands on the table, and the table went mad and ran around, and we couldn't stop it, though we tried to with great strength.

Apparently, Charlot did not feel that the experience was against his Catholicism; that is, it was psychic rather than religious or diabolical. He made only this one experiment because he felt that the investigation of such phenomena did not help him as an artist:

That could be frightening, but as a painter I think that the rapping of tables, the turning of tables, or the tables going mad are not within my department. I still look for what I call visual effects.

I wasn't interested because as a painter, there was nothing painterly about it.

Charlot did believe that diabolism was real, but his interest in the subject was confined to books, like Huysmans', and to accounts of spiritual people like Mademoiselle Marchais.

Charlot visited Mademoiselle Marchais over the next few years. Arriving for one of his visits, he found her in a mystical state, pulled out a small sketchbook, and made a beautiful drawing of her as she emerged.¹⁸⁸ Mademoiselle Marchais died in November 1918 in an old people's home run by authoritarian nuns, *les filles du Calvaire*, who made her life miserable. Charlot, home on leave, learned of her death when he tried to visit her. He was shocked by the attitude of the mother superior:

I said one or two things about being a friend of Mademoiselle Marchais, and she said very definitely that she was mad, she was off her head. Well, I didn't go further than that, of course. But it was interesting for me, the conflict between a personalized mysticism of a person like Mademoiselle Marchais and the authoritarian, perhaps, religion I found in the nuns in that particular old-people's asylum, though, of course, they were doing lots of good too.

But that tied up a little later with my reading of Léon Bloy and so on, where you see similar conflicts. Something like *The Last Columns of the Church*, for example, in

which he takes to task all the people who were most respected and respectable in the Catholic Church of his day. So it has made me grow up in the church but a little bit sidewise and with a sense of, well, a critical sense, not in the sense that I was looking for anything to be critical about, but a critical sense about some “Columns of the Church,” to use the term that Léon Bloy uses. (Interview October 5, 1970)

Bloy, Mademoiselle Marchais, and the Parisian priests who taught him formed a front of similar influence on a central principle of Charlot’s Catholicism:

I’m naturally obedient. I have no desire to be a revolutionary, but all those little touches, either the mystical contact, personal contact with a life such as that of Mademoiselle Marchais, or the well, perhaps slightly Gallican training that I got from my French priests helped me really through life because I’m sort of a personalized person, perhaps through my profession as an artist, and I couldn’t quite manage being simply part of a herd. But I think that religion is a way of emphasizing one’s personality rather than drowning it.

Charlot always had a strong sense of the limits of clerical authority and the rights and responsibilities of the lay person. He was indignant when the American hierarchy tried to condemn criticisms of the clergy, arguing that such criticisms were a venerable tradition in European Catholicism. As head of the family, his responsibility for his children’s education should not be abrogated by priests, and any advanced student and scholar had the right to read books condemned by the Church. The lay person should be recognized as an adult and not treated as a sheep.

A more personal problem, rather than an intellectual interest, was sexuality. As noted above, the first signs of sexual feelings in Charlot’s art are found in 1911 in his oil painting of the cook Mathilde and in an odalisque-like drawing of his cousin Raquel Labadie. Charlot was reared in a world so proper that there was no sex education in schools and probably very little in the family. Because schools were not coeducational, boys encountered women and girls almost entirely within the household, and elders took great care to supervise all relationships among children:

you have to do your best with the women in your life, and the women in my life at the time were mostly those little cousins. And when we grew up—French people are rather strict from that point of view—we didn’t see each other with the same freedom. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Feelings were discouraged especially in regard to one’s peers:

We were told when we were little—*jeu de mains, jeu de vilain*—that is, to play with your hands on somebody isn’t the nicest sort of game. So we never played with our hands. But I remember we had a little cart with a little donkey in the country, and we would go together and I would—my cousin has a little bunch of pink organdies, something, seated by me, and I was very proud to drive the donkey. I felt I was really a very useful person in her life. But it never went further than that.¹⁸⁹

The experience of sexual arousal while painting Mathilde at Poissy seem to have been the first strong enough to trouble him:

JPC: Did you ever discuss that kind of experience with your mother? Did you ever think about it or, either discuss it with somebody or else think about it yourself, mull over it?

JC: Well, I certainly mulled over it, but I didn't discuss it either with my mother or with the cook. I was very careful not to. It seemed to me a very wicked thing indeed. (Interview September 14, 1970)

Charlot had a sexual dream about another cook. As he first told it to me, he woke up at night and went down to her door and pounded on it; in an interview, he described it somewhat differently:

It was our cook. She was a wonderful authoritarian woman, and she had a mustache. She came from Bordeaux, I think. And yah, it was a dream that was very vivid indeed. I suppose I was just plumbing the mysteries of womanhood, and I had few women around—my mother, my sister—but they were out of the dream, and that cook made a very good patsy, so to speak, for my desires. But I remember that I ran after her and ran after her, and eventually, I am afraid, there was something or other, some obstacle, probably the obstacle was ignorance, and nothing happened, and I awoke in a sweat. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Adding to the complication of burgeoning sexuality was the conventional madonna-whore dichotomy of the time. In Charlot's case—as seen in his poem cited above, *Je t'ai vu, je t'ai pu contempler ardemment*—the whore took the equally conventional form of the vamp, with all the mysterious accouterments of the *grandes horizontales* 'the great horizontal ones,' the famous and dangerous courtesans of the rich. Such women are related to the fatal goddess-lovers of Antiquity, "Jeune Diane, Isis, Astarté" (*Pierrot sortant du cabaret*); and their sexuality is mysteriously animalian (*Léda*). The madonna was not sexless, but the innocent, chaste lover in the sanctified relationship of matrimony (*Le fleuve d'or rutilé sur la berge*), a theme Charlot will develop extensively in his later poetry. Normal family relationships with women provided an antidote; female relatives were fully human, a touchstone of Charlot's view of human relations. Consequently, when at fourteen, I was being tempted for the first time by a precocious young woman, my father advised me to spend my time with the family.

The episode with Mathilde shows that women aroused feelings in Charlot—with his sensuality and acute sensitivity to beauty—that were so strong as to be disturbing, especially for a child committed to Catholic teachings about sex: even to indulge in a sexual thought was grounds for eternal damnation. In one of his written *Meditations* dated August 1919, describing his current feelings about women, he recalls his condition in 1914:

mais il n'y a plus la fièvre lascive et moite des seize ans—la montée aux joues
d'amour et ce désir pervers des volets clos—et cette connaissance orgueilleuse de ma
Force et de ma condition—

‘but there is no longer the lascivious and clammy fever of sixteen years—the way love rushes to the cheeks and that perverse desire of closed shutters—and that proud knowledge of my Power and condition—’

In fact, Charlot felt that he was soon able to dominate sexual temptation and could concentrate on the other problem he mentions in the above quotation: his pride. Accordingly, in his May 1927 sketch of his religious life, he reported that sexual temptation replaced that of pride when he entered the army.

Besides the general problem of sexuality of a young male, Charlot faced a particular problem connected to his mission as an artist, a problem he would gradually clarify for himself through the course of his life. A prescribed Catholic antidote to sex was the suppression of one’s sensuality. Charlot’s sensuality, his acute response to physical sensation, was, however, integral to his art-making. Sexuality was, in fact, part of the sensuality that he could not renounce and continue to be an artist; it was part of his response to the beauty of the world. Indeed, sexual sensibility was one factor that enabled the artist to visualize the relations between objects, a prerequisite for composition: “la sensibilité sexuelle, ou la sociale, ou la religieuse, qui seules peuvent l’amener à coordonner ces objets entre eux avec une finalité définie” ‘the sexual sensibility, or social, or religious, that alone can lead him to coordinate these objects among themselves with a definitive finality’ (“Prologue ou Présentation d’un Groupe de Graveurs sur Bois”).

In particular, the practice of using nude models, in the minds of many Catholics, was an occasion of sin. Léon Bloy, for instance, was negative about the practice in his *The Woman Who Was Poor*. Once a year in Hawai’i during the 1950s, parishioners were told to stand and take the pledge of the Legion of Decency, which was charged with condemning films judged to contravene Catholic teachings—most often films with sexual episodes or nudity. Charlot would refuse to stand and his visible position caused comment. When I asked him about it, he said that in his mission as an artist, he was obliged to work with nudity and, therefore, could not take the pledge.¹⁹⁰ Charlot could support his use of sensuality with Roman Catholic teaching on marriage. Unlike pride, sexuality was good in itself and needed only to be channeled into marriage, in which the spouse was treated as a full human being. But sensuality was clearly less important in Catholic teaching than it was in Charlot’s own thinking, working, and living. In Hawaiian religion, he would finally encounter a worldview in which the life of the senses was similarly appreciated.

Charlot would always impose on himself the strict conservative sexual morality he learned in his childhood and adolescence, regarding any lapses as mortal sins. He did not participate in the rethinking of sexuality that had been a large part of French life for some time; he said that everyone around him considered Colette a mere writer of dirty books. In the army and during the Occupation, he was shocked and tempted by the sexual activity, but his condemnation became directed more and more toward the degradation of the women exploited rather than toward the sex itself. That is, his characteristic focus on the whole human being became the dominant factor in his attitude toward sexual activity. He would always speak with compassion of two sexual outlaws prominent in his youth. The homosexual Oscar Wilde, he said several times, died in the odor of sanctity. Mata Hari, the archetype of the vamp of his

fantasies, he described as a poor confused girl who would get drunk at parties and tell everyone she was a spy; he agreed that she had been framed by the French government for political advantage. In Mexico, he did not adopt a puritanical, censorious attitude toward his sexually active friends; his later friend, Norman Pearson, told me that Charlot never became a bluenose like another Mexican artist whose “balls dried up” as he got older. In Hawai’i, Charlot was understanding, even positive, about the sexual freedoms of the classical culture, which had been loudly condemned since the arrival of the Protestant missionaries. Charlot meditated on the prostitute Mary Magdalene, who anointed Jesus’ feet with sensual nard and dried his feet with her long hair; Jesus praised her because “she loved much.” For others if not for himself, Charlot considered sex a most forgivable sin, unlike meanness, exploiting the poor, and so on. And he never lost his French talent for sexual jokes!

In Catholic teaching, pride, just like sex outside of marriage, is a major sin. As I described above, Charlot’s first occasion of pride seems to have been in the special treatment he received from his family and its circle of friends. He overcame any temptation to arrogant behavior and was remembered as completely unpretentious, an impression he made throughout his life. The struggle against pride became internalized as Charlot himself contemplated his talents and his goals. In a fragment of July 1914, even his childhood powers of observation are occasions of pride:

Ah ! Tu peux redresser ta taille et te gonfler
du vain et jeune orgueil de savoir t’essouffler
et rire et boire aux ruisseaux frais lamés d’argent
et de t’extasier au frisson décevant
d’ombres que fait l’envol prompt des papillons blancs,
et d’aimer la lumière avec des yeux d’enfant.

‘Oh! You can draw yourself up and inflate yourself
with your vain and young pride at knowing how to puff yourself up
and laugh and drink at the cool, silver-laméed streams,
and go into ecstasies at the deceptive shiver
of shadows that causes the sudden flight of white butterflies,
and to love the light with the eyes of a child.’

Simply to recognize his special gifts and prepare for the career of an artist could seem to be yielding to temptation, especially with the modern view of the artist as solitary genius. Charlot’s high ideals and goals might just be the symptoms of an inflated ego. The conflict is apparent in Charlot’s early poetry. In *Je t’ai vu, je t’ai pu contempler ardemment* (November 1912) and *Je suis au moment, le meilleur* (1913), he is chosen as respectively victim or champion by the muse and is himself willing to die or to fight in her cause. But is his goal merely a symptom of pride ready for the fall? In *Le soleil frissonne* of May 1913, two roses on a hot day raise themselves proudly and disdainfully above the other flowers:

cierges que consume
un désir trop haut

‘candles that a too high desire
consumes’

They pursue impossible dreams and target the sky until a gust of wind scatters their petals. Similarly, in *Espoir grand maître*, which he dated tentatively March 1915, larvae wriggle towards the light of the stars only to fall like Icarus to their death:

Un instant...puis vaincus, lâchant prise, ils plongeaient
Au gouffre...mais là-haut, larmes d’or épanchées
Les étoiles d’amour tremblaient vers eux, penchées.

‘An instant...then beaten, losing hold, they plunged
Into the pit...but there above, golden tears shed,
The stars trembled with love inclined towards them.’

The problem of pride was complicated by the fact that the artist must assert himself: he must look at things in his own way, depict them in his own style, and defend himself against teachers who would try to change him. From the Christian perspective, this can appear to be pride, egoism, and self-reliance. Charlot will continue to struggle with the problem of humility and the artistic vocation, and his solutions will influence his image or ideal of the artist and his philosophy of art. Similarly, he will have to reconcile his necessary artistic sensuality with a Catholicism that depreciated the body in favor of the soul.

A major characteristic of Charlot’s thinking and feeling from very early is a strong awareness of death. In his first dated poem of April 1912, cited above, he sees his life after childhood as a journey towards his end. In a deleted section of his poem *J’ai été l’indolent témoin de mon enfance* of January 29, 1925, he speaks of a debilitating sense of death from which he has suffered since childhood:

Et de l’enfance à la vieillesse écoutais cette
mienne âme, derrière l’éventail d’ossements
rire à pleines fossettes.

‘And from childhood to old age, I was hearing
this soul of mine, behind a fan of bones,
laugh like a gaping skull.’

Charlot’s eye operation when he was a toddler may have made him feel vulnerable. In fact, his whole sense of the universe being so much bigger than himself—of having to tiptoe through nature—could have had the negative effect of making him feel threatened by it. He once wondered in conversation that babies and little children were so confident, so unafraid. When I asked him what he meant, he said they were so small and surrounded by bigger people and things.

Charlot appreciated the prominence of death in both Christianity and Aztec religion. The capacity for expressing death was in fact an important criteria for Charlot in both art and religion:

To the young soldier just come back from the wars, the Mexican church was also an answer to questions raised by violent death and physical sufferings. Here perhaps a French outlook, in its serene insistency on the metaphysical, would have proved insufficient. A French faith was hard put to reconcile, otherwise than in a syllogism, spiritual goods and the sight of those men, bloated, retching, dying, after a gas attack, this experience of maneuverings and of calculations to send a shell [to] explode where it could wreck more living flesh. The good Mexican martyrs pictured in churches, beheaded, disemboweled or crushed, were a comforting parallel to this still vivid experience. The physical descriptions of flames and worms in Purgatory and in Hell made by comparison seem casual the intermittent hardships one had just passed through.¹⁹¹

Death was accordingly a central consideration in Charlot's own artwork:

the intense drama of the painter is that he has to do with things that are passing. I was giving the example of the war because there it was such an obvious, intense thing, but even nowadays, let us say, that I do a flower piece, I know of course that the flowers will hardly last the time that I do my flower piece. (Interview September 21, 1970)

Charlot could see himself as already dead; his later bookplate—"Jean Charlot m'a cru sien" 'Jean Charlot thought me his'—makes Medieval fun of the pretentious illusions of the living. He could, therefore, imagine his life as a finished whole. That is, an important corollary to Charlot's sense of death is his sense of history. From very early and with great effort and even sacrifice, he gathered documents and materials he thought might be useful to future historians, materials relating both to himself and to others. He was able to use many of these in his own historical writing and donated the entire collection to the University of Hawai'i. Charlot's preoccupation with death seems unmotivated in the middle of a comfortable childhood. But the experience of death would become both personal and common in the next period of his life.

Finally, Charlot's Catholicism stimulated both his idealism and his cynicism—a common result in young people and important for Charlot's later views. That is, he was deeply convinced by the ideals of Christianity, but they were so high that no individual or institution could achieve them. Charlot's religious life, therefore, included negative examinations of conscience, the struggle against imperfections, and long periods of discouragement broken occasionally by moments of consolation. He would expect simultaneously little and too much of other people and react to his disappointments with disgusted anger or deflating humor. He would continue to give of himself to friends, hoping they would begin to act according to his own high standards of friendship; when they did not, he would withdraw into a cordial distance or drop them altogether. His experience of institutions like the Church or governments was inevitably disabusing. As a result, he could never believe that people's problems could be solved merely by social reorganization. No general good would or could be done without individual goodness. The contribution of the artist was to communicate ideas and emotions to the mind and heart that would help the individual achieve a goodness that would ultimately benefit society.

Charlot's Christianity at this point in his life is already a rich mixture of not always consistent elements; a state more familiar to Catholics than to Protestants. In this he was typical of the young Catholics of his time, a portrait of whom was drawn by the pseudonymous Agathon—*Les Jeunes Gens d'Aujourd'hui : le Goût de l'Action—la Foi Patriotique—une Renaissance Catholique—le Réalisme Politique* 'The Young People of Today: Taste for Action—Patriotic Faith—Catholic Renaissance—Political Realism.'¹⁹²—in fact, the extreme right-wing authors Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde. The book was based on a survey done in 1912, but it was not a scientific one: no representative sampling was devised, and no questionnaires were used. Rather the authors interviewed students they themselves selected along with their teachers, read student writings, and invited contributions from others in contact with young people (II ff.). The target group was "la jeune élite intellectuelle" 'the young intellectual elite,' the cultivated, educated future leaders of society, then between eighteen and twenty-five years old, especially the twenty-year-olds born in 1890 (II ff., 64, 196). Since a very small percentage of young French people attended *lycées*, universities, and higher schools, the procedure was criticized even by outside contributors to the book (244 f., 281). The focus on an intellectual elite was characteristically French, even within the Church. For instance, the "missionaries" who were the first founders of the Gilde conceived their mission as evangelizing just the groups Agathon discussed.

Agathon describes a revived interest in Catholicism among the targeted elite, mentioning Condorcet among the schools investigated. In Agathon's portrayal can be found many of the elements in Charlot's own Christianity: the general Catholic polemic, the revived interest in Thomism (208–212), the study of a mysticism within the world (200), the desire to lead a moral life, and even an awareness of Satanism (50). Charlot was perhaps more interested and grounded in the intellectual activity of Catholicism than the qualified anti-intellectualism Agathon depicted (e.g., 81 ff.); Charlot was nearer to Maritain's contribution (208–212). Charlot was certainly more anticlerical and less emotionally attached and subservient to church authorities (67, 204). He also tended less to the simplicity Agathon's subjects prized (e.g., 89 ff., 199). Most important, for Charlot, Catholicism was not attached to the frighteningly jingoistic French patriotism that was central to Massis, de Tarde, and other contributors (e.g., 21–36, 65, 71). Consequently, he did not participate in their rejection of internationalism, humanitarianism, and ecumenism in favor of militarism and even war-fever.

Charlot's family background—as well as his universal cultural sympathies—certainly helped preserve him from such extreme positions and contributed materials to his Christianity that were not available to most French Catholics. Charlot will add even further elements as he moves to Mexico, the United States, and Hawai'i. But by the time he leaves France, he will have given his Christianity a more defined and lasting shape by emphasizing certain aspects over others. That is, Charlot never formulated an all-inclusive, coherent system for his religious views, but his tendencies were strong and clear.

In his religious writings of the time, Charlot takes a technical term, *unitive*, from mystical theology. The devotee is supposed to follow a path through three states or ways: purgative, illuminative, and unitive (Devine 1912). In the purgative state, the emotions are purged, the passions and temptations overcome, and the virtues strengthened. The illuminative state is an advance in purging and

strengthening. In the unitive state, the devotee is freed from the attachments of the world focused exclusively on his union with God.

Charlot accepted the idea of the religious life as a progress towards goodness and a closer relationship with God. His differences from mainstream teaching are revealed in the absence of the word *purgative* from his writings. First, although he practiced a strict, at first even scrupulous, morality himself, Charlot gradually moved away from a conventional Catholic view of suppression of sin as the central concern towards one in which sin was dissolved in one's positive relationship with God. Morality became a positive effort to do good, which led one closer to God. This was implicit in the maxim he recorded in his "Essai sur mon état actuel" 'Essay on my present condition' of September 25, 1922 (*Notebook C* 1918–1923): "depuis 1914 le postulat : lois de Dieu et de l'Eglise vers *l'absolu*" 'since 1914, the postulate: laws of God and of the Church towards *the absolute*,' a mystical aim. Mary Magdalene was forgiven because she loved much. Charlot agreed with Augustine's famous saying, "Love God and do what you want." He once asked, "What has morality got to do with religion?" That is, life did not fit into a set of rules but had to be faced creatively. As an artist, Charlot himself could not follow the regular rules—like not looking at naked women. I believe that Charlot's knowledge of the religious rules of other cultures also stimulated a relativist view: religious Aztecs are enjoined to sacrifice beating hearts but not Catholics. Charlot never used Augustine's saying as an excuse for himself, but I believe its point was central to his tolerant view of others.

Even more important, Charlot's vocation as an artist precluded his following a way that would detach him from nature, emotions, and the senses. Roman Catholic theology is in fact ambivalent on this point. Some teachers emphasize the control and direction of the senses and passions; others, their suppression. Charlot could in fact express the former view, but more often he is defending his right and need to be open to the full power of sensations and emotions. Charlot could, however, be ambivalent at times:

My reference to asceticism seems to me correct. The moral purpose that the ascetic achieves by restraining, for example, his eye, does not exist for the artist who sees in the same spectacle something quite different (and also ~~in~~ as to moral value) from other people. This is why subject matter is not an index to purity in art.

More important though was my assertion that plastic arts fill a need mainly in the lower brackets of spiritual life, may become useless as one approaches unitive vision. So the ascete may simply be a man that has outgrown plastic arts.¹⁹³

The ambivalence of Catholic theology results from the fact that through historical development, it has come to include two alternative views of the end of creation and the individual soul. The later, now common view, derived from Neo-Platonism, is that the good soul ultimately achieves eternal union with God. The earlier, New Testament view is that the dead will be raised corporeally again to a new heaven and a new earth, freed of the results of Original Sin and ruled in perfect order by Christ. The Neo-Platonic view is purely spiritual. The New Testament view includes the entire physical world of elements, plants, and animals as well as human beings in their resurrected bodies. The world is,

therefore, not a lower stage through which the Christian must pass to get to Heaven; he will ultimately live in this world restored to its God-given order. Charlot himself deemphasized the “fallen” character of Creation, reserving evil for human beings: everything was good, but could be misused.

The final unitive state is conventionally described as the ultimate union of the individual soul with God. Charlot can use the term in this sense, for instance, in his *Des femmes que j’ai rencontrées en Allemagne* of September 1919: a religious German woman speaks of seeking such a union with God. Late in his life, Charlot used a similar term for meeting God after death when he wrote to Doly Labadie on the death of her sister Rachel:

A 79 ans (Lundi prochain pour moi) il me semble que la vision de cette vie d’ici-bas devient quelque peu incertaine. Les détails, si intenses dans notre jeunesse, sont plus difficiles à saisir. Je sais que dans mes prières j’aspire à cette unité qui n’est certes pas notre lot ici-bas. Que Rachel soit entrée dans cette unité à laquelle nous aspirons nous fait une patronne au ciel bien proche de notre cœur.

Pardonne-moi cette effusion du cœur. Je parle si rarement de ces choses intimes.
(February 4, 1977)

‘At seventy-nine years (next Monday for me), it seems to me that the vision of this life down below becomes a little uncertain. The details, so intense in our youth, are more difficult to grasp. I know that in my prayers I aspire to that unity that is certainly not our lot here below. That Rachel has entered into that unity to which we aspire makes her a patroness for us in heaven, one very near to our heart. Pardon this effusion from my heart. I speak so rarely of intimate things.’

Charlot does, however, speak of the ultimate goal in larger terms, ones that include all of creation and society, as in his 1916 poem *De la grâce en allégorie d’une Cité close que ses habitants désertent pour y retourner tôt après*, discussed in a later chapter. The end-point is not the Neo-Platonic union of the individual soul with God, but the restoration of the unity of all creation within itself and with Him. This wider view of the unitive state is based on Charlot’s general orientation as an artist and also on his own experience of the different mystical states: his movement through the castles or mansions of St. Teresa, as quoted above. My father told me the story more completely in 1961 while trying unsuccessfully to dissuade me from leaving Harvard to enter a seminary: he had moved from the first castle gradually up to the highest castle, only to find that he was back in the first. Since the movement is from the world to God, Charlot was saying with his characteristic humor that his mystical journey did not raise him above the earth but landed him right back in it; when he reached God, he found himself back in the world he had started from. Religion for Charlot would be living fully in the world rather than leaving it.

The physical world was clearly an ultimate reality for Charlot. From the theologian’s point of view, I would say—though Charlot did not—that he had reached God the Creator and found Him inseparable from His Creation. I am also reminded of some types of Buddhism in which the monk

transcends samsara, the earthly round, and enters nirvana, only to find himself back in samsara. In this tradition of enlightenment, nirvana *is* samsara, only seen differently after the meditative process.

Similarly, Charlot's art would reveal the ordered unity, normally invisible, of the world. In *De la grâce en allégorie d'une Cité close*, order is expressed by the geometric regularity of the city's plan, and people should not revolt against "le Centre de gravité et les relations mathématiques" 'the Center of gravity and the mathematical relationships.' In his "Preuves de l'Existence de Dieu," probably of 1917, Charlot formulates the view philosophically:

J'ai vu, Je vois un enchaînement logique entre tous les faits d'ordre interne et externe, moraux ou physiques, enchaînement créant un mouvement atteignant la sanctification (au point de vue canonique) collective et particulière.

'I have seen, I see a logical chain between all things, of an internal and external order, moral or physical, a chain creating a movement reaching collective and individual sanctification (from the canonical point of view).'

That is, geometric composition was not simply human psychology imposed on objects, but a revelation of the order of creation: "Remember : The only beautiful is truth. Beauty and order are synonymous [*sic*]" (Charlot to Brenner February 2, 1925). He explained:

But I think I have always been conscious that art is a unifying of matters that are not unified, and the only thing that is parallel to that in, well, thoughts or affective thoughts and so on, is a cement between things that otherwise would be unrelated, and I think God is that cement. That is, I don't see any possibility of representing the union of things if you don't believe in that union, and that union we can say is God. That's certainly something that has remained with me always... And I had that same very strong feeling looking at Cézanne, the way he organizes his landscapes of the Estaque, the way the line of the mountains at the back and the line of the branches of the pine tree in the foreground of the picture either parallel each other or contrast with each other, obviously with a logic. Now, if we annul the idea of God, certainly the pine trees on one side and the mountains of the other are unrelated. I don't see any possible physical, family relations between the two, but the relation between the two exists. I think in all my work it is that relation of otherwise unrelated things that is a theme, maybe one of the deeper themes, and I think that that implies God.¹⁹⁴

But objective vision gives us the absolute proof that the accidental plays its role into a permanent fabric, that unrelated objects collaborate, unperceived from each other. Cast shadows cement together the object and its habitat. The branch of a pine tree will complete a pattern started by a range of mountains miles away, a rose and a star furnish an accord. The same shape under shifting lights assumes new meanings. A logic more subtle than our own offers up spectacles in accord with aesthetic laws, bracing like dough all visible things, expounds in its "tableaux-vivants." All that the artist has to do is to read this book of Nature. This reliance in the exercise of one's art

on God as expressed through natural vision results in a good dose of humility, for He is in the most direct sense a teacher. It seems that without this capstone of Faith, this ordered vision, physical as it is, indispensable to the painter, would disintegrate into a successive and meaningless grasp of separate objects. It seems that without faith, man can attempt only the worst kind of academic art. I have a special devotion to St. Veronica who, brushing the kerchief to our Lord's features, branded it with an excellent likeness. Both she and I use canvas as the screen on which to project the image. Both she and I are impelled to paint by looking at the Divine Face, she directly, I through this thin veil of His orderly creation. Her creative action was made possible because of the emotional intensity that acted through her body to the fingertips. All the planning, all the craft, all the knowledge to be found in a work of art would also be null if they were not qualified by passion. (Summer 1951 Apologia)

The unity of artistic composition is an accurate expression of the unity of creation, a unitive vision. Charlot's description of the artist as a true investigator of reality, as much as the scientist, should be understood in this context. As he wrote of Weston: photography is as good a medium as ink painting "with this added security, that Nature being actually such as revealed in his well focused photographs, we come closer to the mechanical proof of its being, in essence, divine" (September 1933: 1). The religious character of art in itself was the ultimate justification for the creation of a liturgical art that was authentic art:

This painter had faith and insight. He was not doing his pictures for the cleric who paid for it. He was not doing it for the parishioners. He was doing it for God and for His prophets. (Charlot 1958 Mary and Art: Lecture II)

For Charlot, the first viewer of his artwork was God, and he himself was judged along with his work:

Before serving the Catholic flock or its pastor, the artist must give obeisance to God: he must not break the rules of sound aesthetics under penalty of ceasing to be a good man. (AA I 310)
a good man makes a good painting, rather than an exact copy of nature.¹⁹⁵

Over the years, Charlot developed what he called his religion of the parishioner, moving from a spiritualistic, individualistic piety to a communitarian worship expressed in all the physical objects and actions of liturgy. Sacraments and liturgy were always important for a Catholic, but Charlot began to place more emphasis on them, for instance, in his liturgical notes made during World War I. I believe that his religious life in Mexico stimulated this movement, not only because of the unusual artistic richness of Mexican devotion, but because its novelty drew his attention. For instance, in France, Charlot had not shared the intense interest in apparitions and pilgrimages, like those of Lourdes and La Salette, found in ordinary worshippers and in the intellectuals and artists admired by Charlot, like Huysmans, Bloy, Claudel, Francis Jammes, and Dom Besse (Duroselle 1972: 117 f.). In Mexico, however, Charlot became particularly devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe and made the pilgrimage to Chalma a major theme of his artwork. Charlot stated that the physical elements of worship, like the ashes smeared on his forehead on

Ash Wednesday, would put him in a “mood,” a state of prayer. The mystical prayer he had been pursuing since his youth was now joined to a physical substance, just as spirit and matter were joined in sacraments and art.

Just as Charlot’s art encompassed the whole human being, both creator and viewer, so he developed a religion that permeated and satisfied the whole of his complicated personality. Being a religious artist was one and the same as being a religious man: “la vie unitive où Morale et Beauté sont la même” ‘the unitive life in which Morality and Beauty are the same thing.’¹⁹⁶ Good religious art came from a good religious person; to be bad and do religious art would have been hypocritical. Similarly, the idea crossed his mind that if he were evil, he could lose his talent (J’ai passé ce temps très tranquille sans jupons—, July 3, 1925).

Charlot’s religious commitment was apparent to his friends, not because he preached to them, but because he tried to be a good person. In his religious notes, he speaks of being a good example, but not a proselytizer. As a result, he was respected by people of different views, like his Marxist colleagues in the Mexican Mural Renaissance. The impression he made was described by Doly Labadie, one of Charlot’s closest friends, in two letters to me:

His religious faith, so strong, so natural and simple, he never imposed it, but all his life was transparent: like a son, like a husband, like a father, and as a friend, that is why he was such an attractive person.

Jean had the death he merited, with all his capacities, loving life, and seeing death like a door opened to eternity, and to a person like Jean, this door opened to love.¹⁹⁷

je l’ai admiré profondément, son caractère gai, sa fine ironie, peut-être accentuée par le désir de défendre l’intime de son âme si profonde, si vraie, ses croyances si fermes, que ni les amis, ni le milieu, ni l’époque ont pu ébranler et tout cela d’une façon si simple, si naturelle, si cachée avec un si profond respect pour tout le monde. Je t’envoie une copie de la lettre que Jean m’a écrite à la mort de Rachel, plus que mes paroles elle pourra te révéler un peu de sa profonde union à Dieu qu’il cachait jalousement. (December 6, 1980)

‘I admired him deeply, his happy character, his fine irony, perhaps accentuated by the desire to defend the intimacy of his soul so profound, so true; his beliefs so firm that neither his friends, nor his milieu, nor the epoch were able to shake, and all that in a manner so simple, so natural, so hidden, with such a deep respect for everyone. I send you a copy of the letter that Jean wrote to me on the death of Rachel. More than my words, it can reveal to you a little of his deep union with God, which he hid jealously.’

¹ This may have been the apartment of Anne's grandfather, Joseph Victor Goupil, or even great-grandfather, Pierre Nicolas Goupil. Odette noted:

Il habitait (quand il n'était pas à Mexico) en 1848 au 66 rue de Bondy. Le 66 est devenu le 70 dit un acte daté de 1851. Depuis 1945 la rue de Bondy s'appelle rue René Boulanger.

'He [reference unclear] lived (when he was not in Mexico) in 1848 at 66 rue de Bondy. 66 became 70 according to an act dated 1851. Since 1945, the rue de Bondy is called rue René Boulanger.

² When in the early 1950s, we saw on television Jacques Becker's 1952 *Casque d'Or*, Charlot was amazed by its historical accuracy, mentioning especially the way notes were tucked into waist-bands and cigarettes extracted from packs. Charlot explained to me the use of *paradis* in *Les Enfants du Paradis* of 1945.

³ Brown 1949. *AA*

I: 366 f. Charlot's views on childhood are shared by many artists: Denis 1912: 253, on Cézanne: "Mais le véritable artiste est comme le vrai savant, 'une nature enfantine et sérieuse.' Il accomplit ce miracle de conserver parmi l'effort et les scrupules, toute sa fraîcheur et sa naïveté" 'But the true artist is like the true scholar, "a childlike and serious nature." He accomplishes this miracle of conserving—amidst effort and scruples—all his freshness and naïveté'; 262, Gauguin went past Greek art "jusqu'au dada de mon enfance, le bon cheval de bois" 'all the way to the favorite toy of my childhood, the good wooden horse.'

⁴ E.g., *ma douce âme d'enfant s'échappe à tire-d'aile*, April 1912, cited above; *Un long et lourd regret a fait de moi sa chose*, November 1913, cited below.

⁵ Charlot's *livret militaire* 'military record book' for the French army describes him in 1917 as having hair that is *châtains foncé* [sic] 'dark chestnut brown' and eyes, *marrons* 'maroon'; he was 1.65 meters or 5'4" tall.

⁶ The certificate is in the JCC. The clipping is there as well, but without bibliographical information. See also Interview October 22, 1970. Charlot joked about this event in his autobiographical note quoted in "About Our Authors" (1937): 252, "...I almost avoided my destiny by becoming the amateur flyweight boxing and savate champion."

⁷ Rivera October 1926: "Notas sobre los pintores mexicanos de hoy," clipping in the JCC from *Social*, Cuba, no page number. The article is not complete. The cut out section on Charlot is numbered "V." A fuller manuscript, Rivera n.d., exists in the Bertrand Wolfe Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University: "que esconde un carita de angel y guarda su cuerpecito de solido boxeador peso mosca."

⁸ Charlot followed boxing in Mexico and then in the United States. He attended a boxing match when he first came to the U.S. from Mexico and remembered being surprised and slightly nauseated by the banks of piggy-pink faces. He would make knowledgeable comments whenever we happened to watch a match, for instance, on the problems of fighting a southpaw. When Muhammad Ali was excluded from boxing, my father made clear to me what a serious blow that was: a boxer had only a few good years and could maintain his skills only by engaging in real matches. (Charlot was sympathetic to Ali when the press was very hostile and thought his statements like “No Viet Cong ever called me ‘Nigger’” were original and eloquent; Charlot felt at the time that white Americans were blind to many negative realities of their society.) Charlot enjoyed Sylvester Stallone’s first *Rocky* movie; he spoke especially of the scene in which Rocky was hitting slabs of beef on television and the champion’s assistant could not get him to take a look. He liked the lines: “He doesn’t know it’s a damn show, he thinks it’s a fight” and “Ain’t going to be no rematch”; both lines seemed to remind my father of the boxing culture.

⁹ Weston 1966: 56. Lewis Andrews provided this reference.

¹⁰ Caroline Klarr remarks (personal communication): “I disagree with you here because Charlot often incorporated objects, such as flowers, foods, into his visual compositions which appealed to these senses, albeit in visual form only.”

¹¹ E.g., *Psychoplastie: La Danse*, 1923. *Seigneur, vous m’avez mis des femmes en travers*, August 1923. *III : De la connaître, j’ai peur*, January 1926.

¹² In late summer 1976, my father asked me if I agreed with him that his Musk shaving lotion had lost its smell. I sniffed it and agreed. He seemed relieved. Some years earlier, he had read a book on aging that warned of fading taste buds. Charlot felt his were working well and joked that he was doing his French cooking in a toaster oven, making his breakfast toast and cheese.

¹³ Compare Weston 1961: 129.

¹⁴ Charlot may have found the story in Vollard 1919: 55 f. (three brass bands). Cézanne thought music inferior to art (56).

¹⁵ Charlot discussed this subject in his interviews of October 16, 1970, and November 18, 1970. In the former interview, he states that the operation was done when he was seven years old, but in the last photograph in which the eye problem appears, he is barely a toddler. Charlot gives the impossible explanation of his condition that he must have received as a child: he had stared too fixedly at the ribbon dangling from the brim of his hat. This idea may be the reason that, as he states, his mother blamed herself for his strabismus.

¹⁶ E.g., Denis 1912: 65, 95 ff., 248–251.

¹⁷ Tabletalk March 16, 1972. In *The Temple of the Warriors at Chichén Itzá, Yucatán* (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931), Charlot states that he used such lines to copy and clarify the Indian artworks: “here reproduced with a heavy line for purposes of clarity” (278); an “ink-line of constant width” (286). He wrote to Weston how much he enjoyed them: They look like colored diagrams and I rather enjoy the unartistic, mathematic appearance of it all (Andrews 2011: 71).

- ¹⁸ Weston 1966: 239. The emphasis on nature is essential to Classical art theory, e.g., Reynolds 1961: 111, 178–180.
- ¹⁹ Quotations from letters received May 14 and May 10, 1932. The painting, *Nude, back, tondo* (checklist number 270), is listed in the checklist as finished in February 1932. In earlier letters, Charlot mentioned his work on the painting: received April 26, 1932: “I have been working on your back the whole day long, that is the picture in a circle, do you remember? It is a nice picture”; n.d.: “Working all day long on your back. I think it is finished by now!” Also, received May 19, 1932: “I painted all day long: on the big flower-piece and again patting your back with the apple under your arm...” In an even earlier letter, he signs off (n.d.): “A nice feeling pat to you from Jean.”
- ²⁰ *J’ai passé ce temps très tranquille sans jupons*—, July 3, 1925. See also, e.g., *Seigneur, vous m’avez mis des femmes en travers*, August 1923: a woman “combla mon idéal de beau” ‘fulfilled my ideal of the beautiful.
- ²¹ Charlot September 1946: 8. See also “College Art Teaching” 1951: “But, alas, in our time, and now for over a century, science has possessed the aura of respect that art had and has lost.” Weston shared the same appreciation of science, which he felt had taught him much about photographing (1966: 121 f., 155, 163, 187, 188 f., 235, 239).
- ²² Hardy 1967: 85; 86. Esthetic language can be used of science as well as art, e.g.:
- Insight in science needs concentrated effort and preparation—that’s true at the routine level, not just at the peaks scaled by Newton and Einstein. It also demands intuition and imagination. In this respect, it parallels artistic insight—equally an attempt to seek new patterns and new perspectives on the world. But those similarities shouldn’t obscure one glaring difference between the two enterprises, which stems from the interlocking, cumulative, and intensely social character of science. In the arts, individuality shines through even at the amateur level. Everyone’s contributions, even if soon forgotten, are personal and distinctive. (Rees 1997: 66)
- This ‘shuddering before the beautiful,’ this incredible fact that a discovery motivated by a search after the beautiful in mathematics should find its exact replica in Nature, persuades me to say that beauty is that to which the human mind responds at its deepest and most profound. (Rees 1997: 96 [Chandrasekhar])

²³ Prudence Plowe to John Charlot, January 25, 2005:

I have the memo. here of a remark your pop made to us. I'd asked him if he
"responded to Picasso—works. (I'd told him P. had seemed to me to have no heart,
and that he'd never stirred me at all.)

Your Papa seemed to have the same view (*I thought*) when his answer was "Picasso
was one who had never been humbled by nature." I never got a chance to get him to
elaborate on this remark, but I always felt that I knew what he meant.

Weston reported the view of Rivera that Picasso "was never influenced or went to nature for inspiration,
always to other 'schools' of art (1961: 57).

²⁴ *La fraîcheur paisible des cieux*. See also *Les portes qui s'ouvraient sont roguées et fermées*, composed
about the same time.

²⁵ "find" 1954. Similarly, he argued that the photographs of Jack Ruby in the Dallas police station before
he killed Lee Harvey Oswald were staged because all the other men were hiding their faces and the one in
the bottom corner was obviously holding a newspaper so that it could be read to establish a date.

²⁶ Interview October 1, 1970. For examples, see, e.g., Charnay 1885: 91; English edition, 114, a drummer,
musicians, and a dancer, a Westernizing rendition. The parallels are clear in Sahagún 1979: Volume 1,
313 recto; Volume 2, 278 recto, 291 recto, and especially 338 verso. The drummer is seen frontally
behind the drum, which replaces or is formally related to his body. The drummer's hands are prominent;
Charlot used especially the gesture of one hand up and the other down, which suggests the action of
drumming. Compare Volume 1, 262 verso; Volume 3, 440 recto. Whether Charlot saw the Sahagún
illustrations as a child is uncertain; they were not published, and I do not know whether reproductions or
loose versions of them circulated among the Americanists he knew. Such depictions of drummers could
be found in other books as well.

²⁷ *Tabletalk* March[?] 17, 1977.

²⁸ Charlot June 22, 1966. The treatment of mental illness by having the patient focus on the objective
environment is classical, e.g., Dodds 1960: 229 f.

²⁹ Vinchon 1924. MacGregor 1989: 281, Vinchon's was "the most important" book written by a French
psychiatrist in that period.

³⁰ MacGregor 1989: 5, 281, 356 note 53 (also 354 note 7); 3, there was interest in naïve art as well.

³¹ Charlot did not discuss this problem, but my mother was aware of it. A rare allusion to it is Charlot's letter to Leonard Good of October 16, 1950:

After Colorado, where ~~many~~ some people were busy plotting and scheming against poor me, Hawaii is a relaxing place. Physically because there is always the warm sea to float on, and mentally because the people are unusually good as a group, hospitable and charitable. Our chairman, Ben Norris, has proved very considerate. In fact, I resumed painting a little, and may have enough for a show in New-York in 1951, but that is not sure yet.

³² E.g., *El Ahuizote*, Volume 1, Number 17, p. 8; compare Volume 1, Number 2, p. 4.

³³ The drawing, page 18,692, faces a sheet of an article dated December 1922.

³⁴ The drawing illustrates Brenner 1925: 145.

³⁵ "Mexico" October 1922, TF. Chase 1932: 10, writes that he found Mexican women "rarely beautiful," but "Charlot, the French artist, after seeing the flowing garments of the Indians, compares them with the virgins of the Parthenon, and holds the fitted clothes of western women to be absurd." A lecture on Roman costume was given in 1918 at a meeting of La Gilde, the liturgical art group to which Charlot belonged. A "J.C." wrote in a report, "Le Cadre": "quel contraste entre ces figures drapées, ces tous vibrants et les costumes modernes sous un ciel maussade et froid !" (1918; see also the notice in the same issue on page 2).

³⁶ Similarly, Charlot learned an enormous amount about Maya clothes and ritual costumes by copying the columns of the Temple of the Warriors at Chich'en Itza: "a rather exhaustive picture of the fashions in vogue during two periods" (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 300). He felt he could identify the clothing conventions for denoting such qualities as rank and profession. He proposed to the Carnegie Institution that they support him while he wrote a book on the subject, but was refused. Now, the subject is recognized as extremely important. Charlot's comparisons reveal his background (293): on a warrior's cap "are probably stuffed birds quite like the ornaments on ladies' hats used not so very long ago."

³⁷ See also Charlot August 24, 1966.

³⁸ Charlot made the same point in *III : De la connaître, j'ai peur* of January 1926.

³⁹ Interview October 18, 1970; see also March 26, 1978.

⁴⁰ *Ludwigshafen Notebook*: 8; brackets indicate cut. See also “Essai sur mon état actuel,” September 25, 1922, *Notebook C*:

c) *vie intérieure* :

petite douleur bête également surnaturelle dans son mode (Dieu pouvait éviter :) mort
Mousmé.

‘c) *interior life*:

little animal pain equally supernatural in its mode (God could avoid it) death of
Mousmé.’

Charlot mentioned Mousmé earlier in his poem *J’aurai dépassé ce monde sans le connaître* (February or March 23, 1918):

comme un drapier toise son drap, dans l’équité,
je mesure, je jauge et juge toutes choses,

métrant joyeusement en Jésus et les siens
ce gros soleil, ce travail dur, ce signet rose,
ce meuble rond, ce sénateur, mon petit chien.

‘as a clothier measures his cloth with equity,
I measure, gauge, and judge all things,

measuring joyously by Jesus and his own
this great sun, this hard work, this rose signet ring,
this round piece of furniture, this senator, my little dog.’

⁴¹ Charlot also appreciated animals by other artists, like Barye’s horse. When discussing an early painting by Vermeer, he said, “The dog is amazing, sort of a full light.” Charlot seems to have been less close to cats, although he did some wonderful drawings of the ones my mother had in their home in Kāhala, Hawai’i. My mother and I were the cat-persons in the family. Michael Cowell noted that in a large group portrait of the Moroccan Division in World War I, a dog has stationed itself in front of Charlot.

⁴² Another wild animal, a mongoose, used to come into our house at Faculty Housing in the early 1950s, climb into my father’s bed, and nuzzle him on the chest. His visiting privileges were withdrawn when he bit my father’s nose.

⁴³ AA I 64 f.; 310. Compare Weston 1966: 242, “I cannot see why nature must be considered strictly utilitarian when she bedecks herself in gorgeous color, assumes magnificent forms, or bursts into song.”

⁴⁴ Interview September 15, 1970. The sketchbook to which Charlot refers has not been preserved. The reason is probably that his mother was keeping his early artworks, but the sketchbook was kept secret from her. Similar works are, however, found in *Juvenilia 1904*, e.g., 72b recto, which seems to be a man with a horse's head holding something in his hands; other images will be discussed below.

⁴⁵ For instance, a man with a fox mask can be found in Bing 1888: Livraison V, Nos Planches, Utamaro Planche du Yoshivara. Also Sahagún 1979: 199 verso, a man with bird head.

⁴⁶ Checklist number 381, *Nude, back, arms raised*, oil, 38" X 28", vertical. This painting was in the Pierre Claudel Collection and was given by Marion Claudel to St. Louis University.

⁴⁷ Interview April 11, 1978. Compare Charlot's view of the Maya (*AA II*: 41 f.):

But in the Mayan scheme of things, man was far from playing the dominant role. He was a well-nigh useless addition to a universe in which planets, stars, and an innumerable and complex host of gods moved in orderly fashion. To live his life without crossing the way of those mysterious beings was man's main concern.

⁴⁸ Charlot to The Tracers Company of America, December 29, 1964. Charlot to Odette Charlot, February 2, 1965: "my only remembrance is that it has to do with a platinum mine and that *parrain* Frederic Caplain helped me clip coupons from the bonds or whatever it is." On December 12, 1926, Charlot wrote to Odette from Mexico, suggesting that she used the "valeurs" 'securities, stocks, bonds,' described by their mother, to settle his debt with her.

⁴⁹ Compare Fineberg 1997: 9, 14, 26, 83–114, 138. I saw some childhood works at the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec at Albi, but I do not know how many are in the collection.

⁵⁰ "Prólogo como Presentation de un Grupo de Grabadores en Madera," 1925 in *Sobre*. I will be citing mainly the French original, "Prologue, ou Présentation d'un Groupe de Graveurs sur Bois," in *TF*. Fineberg 1997: 2–23. Boas 1966: 8 f., 30 ff., 61–72, 76 f., 81–84, 88–102. Denis 1922: 95 ff., opposed the contemporary interest in children's art.

⁵¹ Compare Charlot September 2, 1963.

⁵² Charlot September 14, 1966: lists "facts" that inhibit art: "Sex is one. Money is another." Worrying about selling an artwork "may poison his art at the source." The nonutilitarian character of art was important in Charlot's view, December 18, 1969: "To put it crudely, art, at its most precious core, is useless, useless in terms of our everyday needs and greeds."

⁵³ Compare Denis 1912: 51, "tout devient, suivant l'heure et le temps, un motif de peinture" 'everything becomes, according to the hour and the time, a motif of painting.' Charlot marked the passage in Raphael 1919: 62, Duret: "Monet trouve que tout ce qui existe est beau, que tout est à peindre" 'Monet finds that everything that exists is beautiful, that everything is to be painted.'

⁵⁴ For the subject, compare Herodotus IV.

⁵⁵ McVicker 1994. Philip E. Spalding III discussed this subject with Charlot, made notes on it now in the JCC, and first called my attention to it.

- ⁵⁶ Similarly, in at least one painting, Emil Nolde joined African and Greek artworks.
- ⁵⁷ The statue is illustrated as the frontispiece of Léon Bloy's *Celle qui pleure* (1908). Claudel 1946.
- ⁵⁸ Checklist number 850, *Calvary with three crosses. Mary fainting*, 1957. Mural 1958.
- ⁵⁹ E.g., September 1933; *AA* I: 345.
- ⁶⁰ The pages are numbered from 17,402 to 17,500. Except for the last page, I will refer to them by their last digits and add the letters a, b, and c, indicating recto and verso as well. Many of the pages are missing. The first page is a single 17,402, suggesting that the ledger had been partially used before it was given to Charlot.
- ⁶¹ *Zebra, Elephant with Riding Platform, Horse and Rider, in Landscape*, dated 1904; the dating may be in Henri's hand. *Two military musicians and a horserider*, colored pencil, dated March 4, 1904. *Jour de la marche de l'armée organisée [sic] par le journal la "Nation"*, pencil, dated May 1904. *Horses leaping over barriers on a race course*, dated 1904 (some exercises on verso).
- ⁶² A number of full faces in the ledger—e.g., 06 b and c versos, 30b recto—resemble those in *Jour de la marche*. Ledger drawings that seem similar to *Two military musicians and a horserider* include 52a recto, 52b verso.
- ⁶³ Interview October 31, 1970. Henri depicts it in the ledger, *Poissy Villa St Louis*, with cuts to open the penciled windows behind which people are drawn on the next page (50b recto–451a recto).
- ⁶⁴ Interview September 14, 1970: "eight or nine years old." In the interview of October 31, 1970, he gives a date probably based on the one he assigned to *Juvenilia 1904*: "my discovery of painting in pure color without drawing, which you are referring to, happened when I was, I think, six years old or so." On stylistic grounds, I would place the event at least two years earlier. In "An Artist Looks Back," March 8, 1972, Charlot stated: "there is something which I did—well, let us say that I was maybe five years old, something like that, already grown up..."
- ⁶⁵ 80b verso, 95a verso. The images are based on George Sand's *Histoire du Vêritable Gribouille* 1851: 116.
- ⁶⁶ 81b recto. See also 08c verso, 90a recto–91a recto; 05c recto, identified by Charlot as an illustration of a story.
- ⁶⁷ 54b recto. This drawing has been discussed above as a copy of a Titian.
- ⁶⁸ 31b verso. Compare the earlier 36c verso, in which all the fish are horizontal. Compare the crossed snakes in Sahagún 1979: 236 recto.
- ⁶⁹ 19c verso. Compare Bing 1888: Sommaire du No 2, Planche GC. 2.

⁷⁰ Brenner 1970: 312. Albers was Charlot's prime example of abstract geometric composition:

It's not a question of non-objective or objective because the masters that I prefer around are actually non-objective masters, that is, in our generation. If you look around the walls of this room, you'll find out that Josef Albers is my... the great master really, the man that I respect immensely, and that he's pure abstract, and my feeling is pretty close to also being pure abstract in the picture that I chose... There is something timeless or that is expressed better—in the sense of timelessness or art is expressed—within abstract terms (and I mean abstract out of quality, of course)—than it is in objective art, representational art, unless the representational art is done by a master, in which case it can imbue all the personages, all the action, all the [unintelligible], whatever it deserves with timelessness. (ca. 1971 Charlot)

⁷¹ I am reminded of Charlot's description in Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 258:

a simple, though extremely skilful [*sic*] outline, proper to a drawing at the stage of "massing" by which professional artists try out the balance of volumes in themselves, before giving closer attention to descriptive detail.

⁷² E.g., 67b verso, 80a recto (the sun, the moon, and a human baby are aligned in a row in their cradles), 88b verso.

⁷³ A small, brown, cloth snap-cover sketchbook, "Album A Dessin à Fermoir Déposé, E B & C^{ie}," 3-5/8 X 5 1/4" with cover. The sketchbook contains thirty-eight drawings, mostly in gray or black pencil with some blue pencil and red or sanguine; mostly in horizontal format. All the drawings seem to be from 1905 except number 24, dated May 10, 1907; this late one need not have been done at Royat. Numbers 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18 are by Henri. Number 2 is dated September 5, 1905, and number 6, August 25, 1905; Charlot therefore did not go straight through the sketchbook, but skipped around as he did in *Juvenilia 1904*. For some reason, he used the sketchbook to draw number 24 in 1907; this seems however to be the only drawing not done in 1905. I made notes on this sketchbook in the early 1970s, and Charlot wrote occasional comments on them.

⁷⁴ Sheet of sketches, black pencil, 10-1/2" X 16-1/4." I believe Henri's drawing on the verso was done after Charlot's sketches because Charlot would not have risked damaging it. The subject suggests that the seacoast was Normandy at or near Etretat, where Monet painted similar boats. Gustave Courbet painted his *La Falaise d'Etretat après l'orage*, 1869, in 1870.

A drawing torn from notebook and preserved by Arlette Menêt among the Bouvier papers, *Village Square with Houses and Church*, pencil, unfinished, 21cm high X 26 1/2 cm wide, depicts houses that resemble those of Charlot at this time. The size of the page is not exploited. The paper has been hand-squared, and may have been an assignment. Attribution to Charlot is very uncertain.

- ⁷⁵ I have found paintings of covered boats painted by Monet at Etretat, but not ones used as cabins: Seitz 1960: 122 f.; Herbert 1994: 106–111. Herbert gives the name of the boats as *caloges* (107). They could be covered with thatch or tarred planks.
- ⁷⁶ *Cutouts 1907*, 9-3/4" high X 6-1/2" wide. Charlot had these sheets bound in Hawai'i by Paul Schneller and supplied the title and the date, which is based on that given in a cutout on page 1.
- ⁷⁷ *Anita*, paper cutout, 2-3/8" high X 4-1/4" wide; 6 cm high X 11 cm wide.
- ⁷⁸ *BAMBOULA chez HATTEMER*, 7" high X 3-1/4" wide; the date is on the drawing itself, and Charlot has later mistakenly written January 17 on the verso. *BAMBOULA*, 6-1/2" high X 2" wide, title on verso. Charlot's rebus letter to his father is dated 1909. The drawings of model airplanes in *Sketchbook 1910* may have been done in 1909, a year in which Charlot was active in that field; those drawings are upside down and begin from the back and may, therefore, be an earlier use of the sketchbook.
- ⁷⁹ "Jean Charlot on His Early French Work," *Schoolboys in Street*; color pencil; signed "J Charlot," *J* inside C; dated October 19, 1909; 8-1/2" wide X 6-1/4" high: ruled paper with red margin line; verso, "Back = Delta of Nile?"; possibly from a school geography lesson.
- ⁸⁰ Bernard Silve thought the drawing depicted the students from Le Cours Hattemer taking their daily walk for exercise.
- ⁸¹ 10-1/4" X 7-5/8," crayon, to be discussed below.
- ⁸² *Drawings of Hands and Feet*, 8-1/8" X 11-13/16" irregular shape, signed J. Charlot, dated 1909, a double sheet of squared paper with red line extracted from a notebook, drawings on recto and verso. *Four Sketches of Left Hand*, 6-3/4" X 3-3/4," drawings on recto and verso. *Legs and Foot*, 8-13/16" X 6-3/4"; this drawing may be later.
- ⁸³ 3-1/4" X 4-1/4," soft black pencil (some has rubbed off on the facing white sheets). Charlot made marginal notes in the 1970s on the sheets of my own notes.
- ⁸⁴ 6, on the verso of 5, is Jules' imitation of Charlot's own drawing *Poissy* (7). 6 is signed "Jules Labadie." Charlot noted of 6: "Jules Labadie—mexican cousin who visited us that summer"; and of 7: "model for child drawing." Similarly, 8, on the verso of 7, is Jules' copy of *Poissy* (9).
- ⁸⁵ Colored pencil, 10-1/8" high X 6-5/8" wide, signed artistically and dated 1910. The drawing is numbered "18," which gives an idea of how many have been lost.
- ⁸⁶ Both 6-7/8" X 4-3/4"; pencil and watercolor on watercolor paper. The numbering of neither series is chronological.
- ⁸⁷ 8-7/8" X 11-1/2"; pencil and pen marks on side. The verso contains a poem in pencil in Charlot's handwriting. Odette was studying at the Ecole Normale Catholique.
- ⁸⁸ Another family member or a friend painted an illuminated certificate for her, now in the JCC.
- ⁸⁹ On the verso of *Flowers*, dated 1911, 14" high X 9-3/4" wide. "1909" has been written later on this side of the sheet, but the drawing is too mature for that date and corresponds to the portrait of Odette dated February 1911. The drawing can be securely dated as stated on the recto.

- ⁹⁰ Black pencil, 8-5/3" X 7-1/2," irregular shape cut out of a larger sheet.
- ⁹¹ Oil on canvas, unstretched, 12-1/2" high X 9-1/2" wide. At the top right corner is written in Charlot's old hand: "1^{ère} peinture à L'huile" and an illegible word. At the bottom right corner is written in his later hand: "Mathilde." In his checklist of paintings, he wrote: "*No Nr.* Ptd. Ca 1911. My first oil? Old woman with bonnet (Mathilde). Painted at Poissy."
- ⁹² *Still life with Sèvres-type Vase*, oil on paper, 3-3/4" high X 3" wide, oval shape, 1914(?). *Still life with Crystal Bottle*, oil on special paper, 6-3/4" high X 5-1/2" wide, 1914(?). The possibility must be recognized, however, that these oils should be dated with those done later at St. Mandé.
- ⁹³ *Purple Orchids*, oil on paper board, 8-3/4" high X 4" wide, signed artistically, dated tentatively 1912.
- ⁹⁴ A sketchbook in gray cloth with ten drawings in black pencil, 3-1/2" X 4-1/2". On the back is written "Poissy."
- ⁹⁵ The drawing is in the possession of the Labadie family in Mexico City. A photocopy is kept in the Jean Charlot Collection.
- ⁹⁶ Pencil and watercolor on watercolor paper, 14" high X 9-3/4" wide. Signed "JC" in a vertical box and dated September 1911. As of 1998, property of John Charlot.
- ⁹⁷ Pencil and watercolor on watercolor paper, 14" high X 9-3/4" wide. Signed "J. Charlot" and dated 1911.
- ⁹⁸ Pencil covered in ink and wash, 8-5/8" high X 5-1/2" wide, signed artistically and dated November 1911. "n° 33." written on sheet, indicating that this painting was one of a series.
- ⁹⁹ Pencil and watercolor on watercolor paper, 14" high X 10" wide, signed artistically and dated 1912.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pencil and watercolor on watercolor paper, 14" high X 10" wide, signed artistically. On the verso is the beginning of a drawing of the same scene on which Charlot has written later: "Poissy—1911?" Though stylistically less mature than the *Poissy* dated 1912, the same techniques and size of paper are being used.
- Seine with Boats at Boathouse*, pencil and wash on paper, 35 1/2 cm X 25 cm wide, David Charlot Collection; may belong to this year. The style is unadventurous—the boathouse uncharacteristically realistic—and the watercolor may be by Anita.
- ¹⁰¹ Bournemouth Series, light pencil and watercolor on watercolor paper separated from a pad, 3-1/2" X 5-3/16." Charlot wrote, with a misspelling, on my lists of the early 1970s: "England 1913? Bornemouth?" Number 10 in this series is dated 1913. Some dabs of color on the versos may be the result of Charlot cleaning his brush.
- ¹⁰² *Church*, pencil outline and wash, 9cm high 13 cm wide, torn from notebook; from the David Charlot Collection. I have not been able to study the works in the David Charlot Collection side-by-side with those in the Jean Charlot Collection; my conclusions are, therefore, tentative.
- ¹⁰³ Light crayon, 10-1/4" X 7-5/8." On the verso is an outline drawing in colored pencils of *Blonde Girl with Purple Hat*.

¹⁰⁴ Crayon, 9-3/4" high X 6" wide. The drawing is numbered "20" at the top left. The drawing's resemblance to Pierre Bonnard's lithograph *Rue vue d'en haut* (ca. 1897) is fortuitous, I believe; Charlot's appears spontaneous.

¹⁰⁵ *Street Scene Sunrise*, pencil and wash on paper, 17 1/2 cm high X 12 cm wide; David Charlot Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Pencil and wash, 5" high X 3-1/2" wide, signed "JC" vertically within a rectangle. The paper is the same size as the Bournemouth Series, but the edges have been neatly cropped. A pin hole in the top right corner indicates that Charlot stuck it on a wall. I would associate the undated *Trees and River*, 3-1/2" high X 5" wide, with *Forest Scene*; the size is the same, and the stage of stylistic development appears similar. In the David Charlot Collection, *Forest with Stream*, pencil and wash on paper, 19 cm high X 12 cm wide, is probably by Charlot, although the treatment is more conservative.

Haystack, pencil and wash on paper, 14 1/2 cm high X 22 1/2 cm wide, David Charlot Collection, is probably also by Charlot and is similarly conservative, although with a fine sky. Because of its greater technical assuredness, I would date it later than the above. The painting recalls work by Charlot's mother.

¹⁰⁷ *Poppies*, pencil and wash, 14" high X 10" wide with an irregular right edge; signed J. Charlot and dated 1914.

¹⁰⁸ *Pots and Garden Furniture at Poissy*, pencil or crayon and wash, 7" high X 10" wide, undated. Charlot noted on my 1970s list: "Poissy. Villa St Louis (my grand-father's summer place)."

¹⁰⁹ *Tabletalk* February 11, 1972. Maurice Denis and other Nabis, who influenced Charlot, were involved in such book illumination (Adhémar 1971: 22, 24).

¹¹⁰ Cervantes n.d. The cover is a lined sheet of writing paper that has been folded to hold to the original cover of the book; 10-1/8" wide X 8" high. On the title side of his paper cover, Charlot has written "Don Quichotte"; on the spine "Don Quichotte par Cervantes."

¹¹¹ Chateaubriand n.d. The sheet appears to be a cardboard cover that has been taken off the book; 12" wide X 8-3/4" high. Charlot has written on the cover:

M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand
T. 1
Voyages en Italie et Amérique
1827

¹¹² Moreau, n.d. Charlot has illustrated only through page 15.

¹¹³ Among the subjects found in his earlier works are exotic architecture and still lifes throughout, insects and flowers (30, 115), snow-laden pine trees (42 f., 151), and banners (192). Page 183 resembles one of his sets for his 1910 puppet play, with sails showing above a wall in front of a port banked by a city. Charlot also continues to use the device of showing a similar figure at different stages of the same action in order to suggest motions: hopscotch in *Juvenilia* 1904 (85a recto) and birds in *Miroir* (32).

- ¹¹⁴ Other illuminations that appear early are on pages 18, 30, 46, 51, 57, 78, 81; possibly 31, 198, 199; also the drawing on page 96. A slight awkwardness with the drawing of forms and with perspective, as opposed to deliberate distortions, could identify a work as early. However, most such judgments are necessarily subjective, and Charlot could wobble in maturity of style. Page 179 resembles his work in *Contes*.
- ¹¹⁵ Clear Oriental influence can be seen in the illuminations on pages 9, 13, 36 (at the top), 105, 115.
- ¹¹⁶ Pages 70, 75, 77, 83 ff., 93, 96–97, 109, 122, 171, 174, 176, 185, 186, 188, 195, 196, 198, 203, 208, 209. Page 30 is also unfinished: he ignores some of the pencil and leaves two sections of ink lines uncolored.
- ¹¹⁷ Pages 31, 79. On page 26, he lettered in the title that had been obscured by the dark image.
- ¹¹⁸ On page 32, the roses are too big in relation to the vase. The architecture in the Roman street scene on page 49 is as distorted as Charlot's *Street Scene* of 1914.
- ¹¹⁹ Charlot designed the sets and costumes, including animal masks, for *Noah* at the seboro Theatre, Brattleboro (Clippings 229A, 229B, July 1936). His Black Mountain diary for August 19, 1944, records: "Work on opera costumes for Cohan, Saturday." At Fountain Valley School, Colorado, he designed sets for *The Sorcerer* (March 1948) and *The Mikado* (1949).
- ¹²⁰ In Hawai'i, he also played Lord Edgard in *Thieves' Carnival* and Hugo Kalmar in *The Iceman Cometh*.
- ¹²¹ Probably 1910, but possibly 1911; one light green sheet: 4" high X 4-1/4" wide, with a band 17-1/4" long and 4-1/4" wide.
- ¹²² In the early 1970s, Charlot wrote comments on my sheet of notes on the sketchbook.
- ¹²³ A note on the envelope of the photographs states: "a puppet theater made by Jean Charlot and Pierre Marquet 1912." The date on the theater in the photograph is, however, 1910, which corresponds to the date of the notebook. Lew Andrews, June 18, 1998, informed me that such photographs were called "real photo postcards" as opposed to printed postcards: the negative itself was printed onto a blank postcard rather than a photograph being pasted onto it.
- ¹²⁴ Letter to John Charlot of February 14, 1980. Lew Andrews suggested that Charlot had probably seen some of the numerous tableaux of devils and skeletons made for stereopticons (Charlot's family owned one). Christian art provides of course many other models. Curiously, Charlot never mentioned French *Diableries*, caricatures of the court of Napoleon III (1852–1870) using skulls, like the *calaveras* of José Guadalupe Posada (Walsh 2008: 39).
- ¹²⁵ Diego Rivera told a similar story about his childhood, Wolfe 1939: 10 f.; 1963: 18 f. I have always wondered whether this was one of the many cases of Rivera appropriating biographical elements from his colleagues.
- ¹²⁶ Morse number 572. Charnay 1885: 141, depreciated the Images d'Epinal as crude, childish expressions of a high culture. The Nabis and their friends appreciated them and other forms of folk art (Adhémar 1971: 21, 29 f., 87).
- ¹²⁷ Interview October 18, 1970. Brenner 1970: 303 f., Charlot "strained his eyes on medieval books."

- ¹²⁸ *Coupes de Cyrène*. Perrot T. IX, *Zeus et l'Aigle*, *Coupe du Louvre*. trait incisé, ink and wash over pencil, 10" wide X 7" high.
- ¹²⁹ The classical *Inspiration of the Artist* (1956) was appropriate for the Des Moines Art Center, but was also the result of time constraints.
- ¹³⁰ E.g., Herodotus I 32. Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, lines 1528–1530; *The Women of Trachis*, lines 1–3, 943–946.
- ¹³¹ Martin Charlot made the same point in his movie script *Blinds*, from which it made its way into a celebrated moment in Arnold Schwarzenegger's *End of Days* (1999).
- ¹³² Charlot 1926 "Report on the Columns"; AA II 49.
- ¹³³ *Two Sheets from an East-Asian-Style Screen*, pencil and ink on heavy paper, ca. 1908–1909. (A) Recto: White and Black Weasels under round leaves; verso: Black and white ducks under bamboo leaves; 53 cm high X 33 cm wide. (B) Recto: Black and white ducks under bamboo leaves; verso: Cat, birds, rabbits; 53 cm high X 68 cm wide. Each panel has a signature. David Charlot Collection.
- ¹³⁴ Page 32. This was not, however, the model for Charlot's in *Juvenilia* 1904 73c recto.
- ¹³⁵ *Mille et Une Nuits* n.d. The volumes are heavily illustrated: "Édition Illustrée par les meilleurs Artistes Français et Étrangers."
- ¹³⁶ La Fontaine 1868. See also la Fontaine 1847: e.g., 37, a good skeleton for death.
- ¹³⁷ *Manuel Maçonnique* n.d. B.-Clavel 1845. Charlot himself used an overt symbology with geometric symbols in his 1930s illustrations for Paul Claudel's commentary on the Apocalypse; the main influence of those drawings is, however, German art.
- ¹³⁸ Henri Charlot has written his name on the cover. A kitchen scene with a big oven and pots resembles distantly Charlot's own theme of the Mexican kitchen.
- ¹³⁹ Interview October 22, 1970. Hugo 1829: frontispiece. The memory suggests that the book was purchased during the period of Charlot's early Orientalist interests. The book is one of those listed to be taken with Charlot into the Occupation.
- ¹⁴⁰ In an undated letter to Odette, probably from 1939, Charlot answers her question on which books he would like her to send him: the sixteenth-century poets like Joachim du Bellay and Rémy Belleau and works by Léon Bloy and Paul Claudel. She should sell the big series like the history of literature and the complete works of Corneille.
- ¹⁴¹ Some of the information below is from my "List of JC books preserved by Odette" and verbal communications from my father.
- ¹⁴² March 8, 1972. See also April 6, 1966.
- ¹⁴³ Interview November 12, 1970. José Clemente Orozco admired the work; Orozco 1962: 156.
- ¹⁴⁴ In fact, thirty-eight out of sixty-seven.

- ¹⁴⁵ Tabletalk August 14, 1976. *Myself, Portrait-Landscape*, oil, 1890, National Gallery, Prague. Charlot apparently did not see the 1911 retrospective of the artist, Altschuler 1994: 27.
- ¹⁴⁶ The JCC contains a nineteenth-century book with many engravings, *Antonino y Anita*. The front pages are missing, and it is not clear whether this book belonged to the family or was a later purchase by Charlot.
- ¹⁴⁷ Also Charnay's *A Travers les Forêts Vierges* (1891), which the family probably owned.
- ¹⁴⁸ Charlot's description of the work resembles a series in the Goupil Collection, Boban 1891 *Atlas*: plates 66–70.
- ¹⁴⁹ Charnay 1885. English: Charnay 1887. Tabletalk February 12, 1972.
- ¹⁵⁰ Charlot may have been thinking of the illustration on page 427 (French edition) of Charnay trekking through the jungle shirtless and in shorts.
- ¹⁵¹ French pp. 140–144; English 169–176; Tabletalk March 4, 1972; *MMR* 179 f. Génin 1912: 311 f.
- ¹⁵² French 12, 31, 33, 35 (information about the illustrations is on page 459); English 45, 49, 51. Other influential scenes can be found, e.g., extracting pulque: French 59; English 77; and a Mexican kitchen: French 471.
- ¹⁵³ Charlot's letter requesting special permission to study the Goupil Collection is dated November 17, 1914. He regularly placed the event too early in his life: thirteen years old, *MMR* 179; Morse 1976: viii. He got it right, sixteen years old, in the interview of September 21, 1970.
- ¹⁵⁴ Houses: e.g., plates 8, 9, 26, 29, 59, 60. Courtyard complexes: e.g., 33, 44; 12 is a full-page composition of rooms around a courtyard. Temples: e.g., 10, 43, 48, 51; Charlot used 71 for an illustration in Amelia Martinez del Rio's *The Sun, the Moon, and a Rabbit* (1935): 150.
- ¹⁵⁵ Charlot 1946 "Pre-Hispanic Quota": 4 f. *MMR* 9 f. Braun 1993: 36 ff., 96 f., on contemporary avant-garde interest in Precolumbian art. Fauchereau 2013: 93, Picasso's and Apollinaire's interest in Aztec art.
- ¹⁵⁶ Interview October 22, 1970; Charlot had typically minimizing school memories of some of his fellow students: "Later on they [two Dubonnet boys] were in the news, of course, and one of them became a very...a rather famous racer in automobiles, and I was astonished because he had been rather slow on the ground—his feats of speed with automobiles." I thank Bernard and Sandra Silve for much of my information on Le Cours Hattemer and Condorcet.
- ¹⁵⁷ In 1935 (the date 1937 is sometimes given), the building on the current site—52, rue de Londres—was constructed for the school.
- ¹⁵⁸ Charlot had some knowledge of Greek language. In the early 1950s, he explained to me that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* originally meant *after the Physics*.
- ¹⁵⁹ The surviving *fiche* on Charlot at Condorcet begins in October 1911, when he would have been thirteen or in the upper school. I believe, however, Charlot was in the lower school earlier. I have not yet been successful at gaining access to his school records at the Cours Hattemer and Condorcet.

¹⁶⁰ In 1933, Charlot met in New York City a fellow student: “déjeuner avec Le Roy flutiste. camarade à Concorcet” ‘lunched with Le Roy, flautist. comrade at Concorcet’ (Diary January 20, 1933).

¹⁶¹ Autobiographical notes. English. Quoted in “About Our Authors,” *American Scholar*, Spring 1937; p. 252.

¹⁶² *Théâtre de P. Corneille, avec les commentaires de Voltaire* 1797, Volume 3: 71.

¹⁶³ Interview October 31, 1970. Peter Charlot, September 16, 1998: “Papa told me he remembered some relative working on a model of the Wright Brothers airplane... When I wanted to take up flying in high school,... both Parents sat me down and talked me out of it.”

¹⁶⁴ Interview October 5, 1970. Charlot was naturally against the imposition of Western culture by Christian missionaries. He told me a story of the Chinese artist Tseng Yu-ho. She was sent to a Roman Catholic school, where the nun asked her name. When the nun heard it, she said, “We’ll call you Betty.” Christianity immediately ceased being an option for Tseng Yu-ho.

¹⁶⁵ Summer 1951; 1954a: 99 f.

¹⁶⁶ Interview October 5, 1970. See also *Born Catholics* 1954a: 100 f.

¹⁶⁷ Summer 1951; 1954a: 100; Interview October 5, 1970.

¹⁶⁸ Tabletalk undated. Compare Claudel’s emphasis on French saints in his *Feuilles de Saints*.

¹⁶⁹ Charlot remembered taking the book into the army, but it would have been late in his service, not early as he guessed (Interviews October 10, 1970; October 13, 1970); the book was first published in 1919. I have used the fourth edition, 1965. Régamey 1948: 52, 54.

When I was a child, my father described to me Albert the Great as the last person able to master all the learning of his time; the limited state of medieval knowledge made this possible, but the feat was still impressive.

¹⁷⁰ Baldick 1955: 350 ff. Besse 1917: 21, “la possibilité d’une existence à la fois monacale et laïque, qui lui laisserait, avec certains avantages de la vie religieuse, la liberté personnelle dont il sentait le besoin physique et moral” ‘the possibility of an existence at the same time monastic and lay, which would leave him, with certain advantages of the religious life, the personal liberty which he needed physically and for morale’; 22, Huysmans wanted to found “une colonie d’artistes oblates” ‘a colony of oblate artists.’

¹⁷¹ Interview October 5, 1970. For Grünewald, see also Interview November 12, 1970. Huysmans on Grünewald: n.d., *Là-Bas*: 6–10; Baldick 1955: 123 f. 144, 292, 303. Charlot did not mention Huysmans’ pioneering interest in Flemish Primitives. On the other hand, Huysmans did not like Stephan Lochner and the Cologne School, whom Charlot much admired during the Occupation (n.d., *La Cathédrale*: 293 f., 296; Baldick 1955: 122).

¹⁷² 1917 *L’Oblat*: 349 f. Huysmans and the arts: e.g. 1895 *En Route*: 10 f.; Calvet 1931: 58 f., 61 f., 68 f.; Baldick 1955: 179, 181. Liturgy: Baldick 1955: 191 f., 196, 206, 284, 296, 298, 300, 302, 313, 319, 337, 339, 350 f.

¹⁷³ E.g., 1929 *À Rebours*: 18–21 (colors); n.d., *La Cathédrale*: 95–105, 124–129, 250 f., 313, 334–348, 354–358; the ritual use of colors in Fra Angelico, 141 ff, 150–163. See also Denis 1922: 203 f.

¹⁷⁴ E.g., 1895 *En Route* 18, “la laideur est sacrilège”; Calvet 1931: 66, “l’œuvre du démon” ‘the work of the devil’, 67; Baldick 1955: 186, 261, 319, 337.

¹⁷⁵ Interviews October 5, 1970, June 12, 1971. Emmerich was a favorite of Huysmans: n.d., *Là-Bas*: 10; n.d., *La Cathédrale*: 238, 368, 393; 1895 *En Route*: 205–209; 1917 *L’Oblat*: 244 f.; Baldick 1955: 194. Lydwine: 1895. *En Route*: 31, 58 f. Huysmans was interested in many more mystics that Charlot did not study. Charlot also studied St. Hedwig (ca. 1174–1243). Emmerich may have been an inspiration for Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Das Marien-Leben* (1912), although he could have used similar traditions like the *Golden Legend*.

¹⁷⁶ N.d., *La Cathédrale*: 304–310 (“fresques” ‘frescoes’); 1917 *L’Oblat*: 350. Baldick 1955: 246, 250, 276.

¹⁷⁷ Gallicanism: 377 f. Epinal: 1895 *En Route*: 42. Capitalism: 1929 *À Rebours*: 291 ff.

¹⁷⁸ Interview October 5, 1970. In the interview of September 21, 1970, Charlot emphasized the visual sources of his views of simplicity:

Well, I mean, we could say, as you said, that the idea of poverty comes in through literary media. Léon Bloy, of course, is the most obvious link in the question of the poor, like *The Woman Who Was Poor*, for example, his novel, but I don’t think so. I think that words and images are two different things and that my loving simplicity—I have also not only the poor people and the Indians and the shepherds, but I have also in my pictures the kitchen chair. I think all the chairs I’ve been painting have been kitchen chairs, have come really from the fact that those are *more so*, more man and more chair, than if they were more sophisticated. That is purely a visual affair, a visual taste.

¹⁷⁹ Charlot Writings Related to MMR: Passages Cut; *AA* II: 254. Orozco V. 1983: 430, called Orozco “El Léon Bloy de la pintura” ‘The Léon Bloy of painting.’

¹⁸⁰ Interview December 7, 1970. Agathon 1913: 198, note 2, the strong influence of Claudel on the young; 71, the importance for them of the Catholic literary renaissance. Denis 1922: 53 f. In France, Charlot owned at the very least a copy of Claudel’s poem on Thérèse de Lisieux and his *Cinq Grandes Odes*, Nouvelle Revue Française, Paris, 1913. After he met Claudel in the United States, Charlot collected more of his publications.

¹⁸¹ Interview October 7, 1970:

Well, that talk was given to our guild, to the Gilde Notre-Dame, and I had never read Bergson, but he was in the air at the time, and I pretended that I had read him, and there were some things about the unreality of reality or reality as understood in general in Bergson that I had picked out really either of reviews of his books or talks with friends that I used illegally, I would say, in my talk, because I hadn't read the texts themselves.

See also the poem *Le 19ème siècle a drapé dans l'hermine*, written between November 1915 and February 1916. For other examples of such Catholic rhetoric, see, e.g., Agathon 1913, *passim*, especially 5–20, 74–79.

¹⁸²

¹⁸³ E.g., quoted in Agathon 1913: 211, “la contemplation le terme normal de toute vie chrétienne, auquel tout le reste, même les vertus, était subordonné comme un moyen” ‘contemplation, the normal end of all Christian life, to which all the rest, even the virtues, was subordinated as a means’; “dans l’union contemplative les procédés naturels de l’intelligence doivent faire place à ces ténèbres pleines de lumière dans lesquelles Dieu se fait connaître *par expérience*” ‘in contemplative union, the natural procedures of the intelligence must make way for these shadows full of light in which God makes himself known *by experience*.’

¹⁸⁴ Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin, January 2, 1873–September 30, 1897. She was canonized as Thérèse de l’Enfant-Jésus in 1925. Charlot owned a copy of Paul Claudel’s poem *Sainte Thérèse*, published in 1916. Charlot himself wrote a poem *Thérèse de l’Enfant Jésus* in August 1921.

¹⁸⁵ E.g., Volume 2, Chapter 5. Other mystics mentioned by Charlot include Mechtilde de Hackeborn (1241–1298), Angela of Foligno (1249–1309), Anne Marguerite Clément (1593–1661), Marcelline Pauper (1666–1708) (Charlot ca. 1926–1927).

¹⁸⁶ Agathon 1913: 68, 201. Charlot was still involved with the Society in 1920. On the back of his liturgical cloth designs of that year, he wrote: “St V, de [shorthand: Paul]”; “aller St V de Paul” ‘go to St. Vincent de Paul.’

¹⁸⁷ Huysmans did it, Baldick 1955: 141 f.

¹⁸⁸ “Mlle Marchais, morte Novembre [Octobre] 1918, chez les Filles du Calvaire, 57 Rue de Lourmel,” pencil, paper torn from sketchpad, 6-3/4” X 3-3/4.” “Jean Charlot’s Notes on Early French Work”:

Mlle Marchais. Done from life. Writing added later. Must have been done when still in school because visiting her with Vincent de Paul Society, 1913-1914. But good drawing so could have been done later. But before she went to Old People's home in 1915. Came back from Front on *permission* and went immediately to visit her. She had died the day before.

Tabletalk March[?] 17, 1977: "The old woman he knew in France was a true mystic. He thought she practiced bi-location. Once he came in on her when she was just 'coming back.' He said she was in a daze. = Mlle. Marchais." On a list of things to do while on leave in 1918, Charlot wrote: "Mlle Marchais chez les Dames du Calvaire rue de Lourmelle [*sic*] 55."

¹⁸⁹ Interview October 31, 1970. Compare *On a beau les bourrer avec des connaissances*, finished November 1924:

On s'installe, on clôt l'huis et les persiennes. "Home sweet home." On dit "Tout crée est bon jouissons-en"
On s'apaise et on est comme quand, paume à paume
Jouaient au bois cousine et cousin de onze ans.
'One gets settled, closes the door and the shutters. "Home sweet home." One says, "Everything created is good, let us enjoy it."
One pacifies oneself and is as when, palm to palm,
one played in the woods with one's cousin of eleven years.'

A similar experience is described in *Ce bleu baroque d'hors ces nuages maussades...* of May 1922. In 1923, Charlot recorded two dreams that included young girls: "Elle m'isole alors du groupe avec une petite amie (j'ai comme 12 ans et elle 9)" 'Then she isolates me from the group along with a little friend (I'm about twelve years old and she nine)' (1918-1923 H. Rêve); "enfin l'impression de "plénitude enfantine" au bras de ma petite compagne et un réconfort qui dure encore aussi" 'at last the impression of "infantile plenitude" on the arm of my little companion and also s comfort that still lasts' (1918-1923 I. Rêve).

¹⁹⁰ Norris 2009: 98.

He and his family were publicly Catholic, but in the French liberal and independent style. One Sunday I attended mass at their parish church with Jean and his family. I sat with him in the second row, supporting his refusal to take the church's Legion of Decency Oath; as artists, we needed to be able to work with nude models.

¹⁹¹ Summer 1951. John Charlot 1983: 213-217.

¹⁹² Agathon 1913. Sutton 1982: 50.

¹⁹³ Charlot to Father Edmund L. Binsfeld, December 7, 1940. Compare in his poem *Psychoplastie: Le Chant*.

¹⁹⁴ Interview October 7, 1970. See also Interview November 12, 1970, quoted in Chapter V.

¹⁹⁵ Charlot Ca. 1940s. The connection of good work with a good man is Classical, e.g., Dionysius Cato's definition of a good orator: "vir bonus, dicendi peritus" 'a good man skilled in speaking.'

¹⁹⁶ "Diverses Sortes de Mauvais Peintres" December 1922. Similarly, scientists had to act morally. Charlot was disturbed by the participation of scientists in the development of the atom bomb and other military hardware ("College Art Teaching" 1951). He told me in the early 1950s that they had to take responsibility for their work; they could not say that they were merely doing the science and leave to others the use of their inventions.

¹⁹⁷ February 14, 1980. When I myself left the Roman Catholic Church, Charlot accepted my decision without discussion.