

5. THE DEATH OF HENRI—LA GILDE

5.1. THE ILLNESS AND DEATH OF HENRI CHARLOT

July 1914 marks the first major division in Charlot's life with the breakdown and subsequent lingering illness and death of his father Henri. Charlot's life, art, and thinking were transformed. Already unusually earnest for a person of his age, Charlot intensified his pursuits in art, literature, and scholarship. Charlot recognized this clearly. He divided his first two collections of poems between those up to July and those "à partir d'Août 1914 (retour d'Allemagne)" 'from August 1914 (return from Germany).' The poems of the first collection I have described in chapter 3 "Childhood and Adolescence"; the next poems have a new seriousness and are more directly personal expressions, becoming a prime biographical source.

A similar change can be seen in much of Charlot's artwork. Up to July, the drawings and watercolors continue the earlier trends. For instance, he paints *Forest Scene* at his uncle Caplain's summer place at Chaumontel. His happy mood is expressed in two pencil and watercolor self-portraits and one portrait of an adolescent of the same age, probably a school friend, that he made certainly before July.¹ The three are done in his mature pencil and wash style of the time, and all are sunny. The friend is portrayed affectionately as lively and at ease with his tousled hair and open shirt. The first self-portrait is a studious depiction. Charlot is wearing a brown jacket and gray shirt. He leans forward as if listening to a conversation with an engaged, slightly amused expression; a young intellectual. The second self-portrait is unique among Charlot's. The freest in its washes and the sunniest of the three—bright sunlight casting strong shadows over his face—Charlot presents himself informally, coatless and with tousled hair, including a long strand curling over his left eye. Most unusual, Charlot is smiling, an almost unique occurrence in his portraits and perhaps evidence that the watercolor is based on a photograph.

A larger self-portrait is related to the two above but is completely different in mood.² The clothes are similar to, if not the same as, those in the studious self-portrait, and the face and hair are like the smiling one. But the larger watercolor is darker and more foreboding with its strong charcoal strokes. Charlot is not smiling, and his eyes have been set in very dark shadows, the pupils peering out as if from a cave. It is as if Charlot had gone back to the smiling image after July and painted a new one to fit his current mood. Similarly, he did a Cubistic, full-face self-portrait after his return from the war that expressed the sufferings he had undergone.

Although born in Russia, Henri had been reared in Germany and spoke the language like a native:

he had been educated in Germany. He was born in Russia, in Moscow, and much of his education had happened in Germany. I don't know the details myself, but I know, of course, that he spoke Russian and German and French equally well. (Interview November 18, 1970)

Henri's German education had been funded by his Russian father, and Charlot had not learned much about that period of Henri's life "because I knew that my father didn't especially want me to." Henri also had important business dealings in Germany, and his German colleagues had dined at the family home:

The export-import had to do with China, and my father represented those German firms in France. It was a little unusual, I would say, because he spoke perfect German, just like a German, and we used to receive at home quite a number of those German people or German families when they came to Paris, so that we knew Germans. But those people were really businessmen, and I had very little to do with them as a child, and I'd had no relationship with them as a child. (November 18, 1970)

Henri, who wanted his children to be as international as he was, seems to have encouraged them to take an interest in Germany. In August 1914, Odette was visiting Bavaria with several girlfriends and having an outing with young German officers in charge of ballooning; some Germans aloft in a balloon had sent down to the girls a military message sheet filled with gallant notes in German and French.³

The international situation was tense after the assassination of the Grand Duke Ferdinand of Austria on June 28, but Henri felt no need to postpone his month-long trip, which had probably been planned for some time. Many business people, aware of the strong commercial connections among the European nations involved, found it difficult to believe that war was a serious possibility. Indeed, most people thought the situation would be handled diplomatically.

The July trip to Freiburg-im-Bresgau, a small, famously picturesque city in the Black Forest of southwestern Germany, had been planned as part business trip and part holiday for Henri and his son. The trip started well enough. Charlot took a typically touristic picture of his father in front of the Freiburger Münster 'minster' (a postcard of the church can also be found in the JCC). Charlot had characteristically brought along a small sketchbook with tear-off sheets, and the two surviving sketches are of a typical Black Forest landscape with a farmhouse and outbuildings and of a peasant woman.⁴ The woman is dressed in her regular clothes, not her formal costume, but Charlot describes them carefully with particular attention to her head gear, an interest seen in his earlier peasant subjects. Color notations suggest that he was planning to use his sketches later for a larger work.

The political situation, however, was moving quickly towards disaster. In late July, the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to mobilize. On July 28, the Empire declared war on Serbia and bombarded Belgrade. On July 30, Russia ordered mobilization. On the 31st, Germany sent its ultimatum to Russia and France, and on August 1, mobilized and declared war on Russia. France then mobilized. On August 1, German troops were sent against Luxemburg, and on August 3, Germany declared war on France. That night, Germany invaded Belgium, and on August 4, Great Britain declared war on Germany. The inconceivable was indeed happening. Charlot described briefly the trip to Freiburg and their escape:

Well, of course, I was only sixteen when I went with my father—it was before the war—and I went to Freiburg-in-Bresgau, which was a student town. Father, of course,

could merge with the people, speaking perfect German. My German wasn't that perfect, but we arrived there in July, I think, or the end of June, and the declaration of war between—what was it?—Serbia and Austria happened soon after. And of course, I couldn't realize that that meant war between Germany and France also. It was too complicated. But everybody around us knew it. And there was a bigger boy in the family where I was, and he started cleaning his gun and so on. The poor guy probably was called to the wars as soon as they were declared. There were big movements of German troops towards the French border, and father and I actually took the last train that ran between Germany and France. If it hadn't been for taking that train, we probably would have been put in a sort of a prisoner camp for civilians for the duration of the war. Of course I liked very much what I saw of Germany...

(Interview, October 22, 1970)

Charlot's feeling of the unreality of the situation can be seen in two sketches he made of the enthusiastic reception of the war news in Freiburg, *Fat German on Horse* and *Manifestation Guerrière*, which Charlot described:

man on horse manifestation guerrière done at Freib-i-Br. War had just been declared in Serbia, and because it was a student town, there was lots of enthusiasm. Going to pass month in Germany, but cut short. Took last train out that passed the French frontier.⁵

The German officer obviously piqued Charlot's French humor: the gray-coated, helmeted form—obese enough to be as wide as the hindquarters of the horse he wobbles on—is no martial vision. The gaily colored students parading in front of the gray medieval buildings seem more festive than aggressive with a happy red balloon floating among them. Such were the enthusiastic university students—a tiny portion of the population and the intellectual future of Germany—who were soon rushed almost untrained into battle, shoulder-to-shoulder against the finest riflemen in the world, the British regulars, in what became known as the *Kindermord* 'the murder of the children' (Greenhalgh 2014: 52).

Henri—who had earlier ordered Odette to learn a manual trade to fall back on in case of a catastrophe—knew only too well that a war was coming and that he would be ruined by it. Charlot made a remarkable photograph of his father boarding the train to France. Beside the dark train platform, the compartments form a steeply diminishing perspective. Henri stands on the steps of the car, his body facing towards his son, but his face turning away to his left and staring into space. His eye is feverish, and his eyebrow arched high. On the slow, halting trip back to Paris, Henri had a nervous breakdown. Jean kept his father collected and helped him back to their apartment at the *Chaussée d'Antin* and into his bed, where he would stay until he died. Henri was able to communicate somewhat, but fluctuated in lucidity. Charlot said that he spoke about religion, but his condition was such that Charlot could not believe that his father had changed his views on his deathbed. Charlot kept Henri's attempt of June 5, 1915, to write to a friend in St. Petersburg—"Mon cher Gref"—thanking him for a fur jacket and regretting that he cannot go to Russia because of the war. The handwriting has degenerated from the

large flowing script of Henri's courtship letter to Anne into a shaky, crabbed hand. He makes three attempts on the paper and a fourth on the envelope; he cannot get his sentences right.

The family cared for him lovingly. Louis sat with him in his room; Odette probably made a patriotic ribbon for his fez-like night cap. Charlot himself made a remarkable series of pencil portraits of his father sick and finally on his deathbed.⁶ In the earliest—the verso of “Administration Générale”—Henri has the beard he grew after his breakdown, probably because it was too difficult to keep him shaved. He seems almost normal. His hair is growing out, rather than being kept as a crew-cut, but it is carefully combed. His face is fleshy, and he nestles comfortably and solidly in the large easy chair, reading his newspaper. His left shoulder and arm follow the contour of the chair. Only a tightening of the skin between the eyebrows and an vagueness of the focus of the eyes betray the perturbation of his mind, a disturbance reflected in the strong, almost chaotic pencil lines of the space behind his head. *Portrait of Henri Charlot Sick, in profile*—was in all likelihood done in the first part of the winter of 1914; Henri's face is thinner, but not as emaciated as it became progressively through his illness. He is lying down asleep, heavy covers pulled up under his chin. His beard seems unkempt and flares out, but his hair is still carefully combed. Charlot has drawn the portrait in pencil on gold paper—probably imported from Japan—perhaps honoring his father by making the image precious, icon-like. The drawing is not quite as mature as his contemporary work, as if Charlot were thrown back somewhat by the subject. But he is looking very attentively at his father, recording him with great care.

A set of drawings on one sheet, despite their differences, were probably done through January 4, 1915: *One sheet: three portraits of Henri Charlot sick; and one of Louis Goupil sleeping*; verso: *Two Portraits of Henri Charlot sick, one cut off*. The drawings on the verso are done in careful, thin pencil strokes. In the full-face view, Henri wears a fez; in the profile view, a night cap. Henri's increasing thinness is carefully noted, his cheekbones becoming more prominent—making his face seem very Russian—and the two vertical muscles on his neck standing out. In the profile, the back of his jaw is sharp under the tautening skin. The face of the profile has been cut off, probably when Charlot was later trimming the recto for preservation. In the full-face view, Henri is closing his eyes, perhaps asleep. The right side of his face is in shadow, probably thrown by a lamp beside his bed. His face seems to bear down on some thought; though ill, he is a strong man.

The portraits on the recto are done with the heavy, bold pencil strokes found in other drawings by Charlot at the time. They seem to impart an energy to their subject, communicated especially by the bushiness of the beard, perhaps the last sign of bodily strength. Again Charlot emphasizes Henri's “Russian” cheekbones, just as he would Louis' “Aztec” jaw. But Henri's face is listless, his eyes vague, directionless, even unseeing; they have lost the disturbing brilliance of the photograph taken at Freiburg. His eyebrows are fixed in a high arch over his overhanging eyebrow ridge. The beard covers his mouth. Henri is being cared for. He wears the same fez that Louis does, slumbering in the sick chamber. On it has been pinned a ribbon, probably a patriotic one such as Odette sewed for Jean.

In *Portrait of Henri Charlot, sick in bed*, the illness has advanced alarmingly. The drawing was done on August 8, 1915, a little over a month before Henri's death. The sketch is light with few lines, but

it describes the situation exactly. Henri's beard is fuller, but it now seems less energetic, falling weakly. The face and neck are very gaunt, and Henri is becoming unrecognizable. Two thin strands of hair dangle wisply from the cap line. Henri is sitting up, but staring even more vacantly, helplessly. A personality is being emptied out.

Henri died on September 15, 1915, in their new home at Saint Mandé, into which the family had moved in the summer of that year. In the Jean Charlot Collection, wrapped in a sheet of Henri's business stationery is a dried "fleur de la croix mortuaire d'Henri" 'flower of the mortuary cross of Henri.'⁷ Jean drew the body twice, probably right after the death. Henri's head is still propped up at a steep angle, probably to prevent the jaw from dropping. Jean draws him with a large number of small strokes, creating at times a tone. He is looking for a long time at his father, studying his face, committing it to memory, and paying him the homage of his art. Henri's face has relaxed and seems fuller, but his brow is still furrowed as if in worry. His eyes have sunk deeply into their sockets. On September 22, 1915, Charlot drew a portrait of his father laid formally out on his deathbed. His head has been let back onto a pillow, his beard has been trimmed, and a rosary has been placed in his folded hands. Perhaps Anne took Henri's religious murmurings more definitively than Jean had. Henri seems to be wearing a Russian shirt. Unlike the previous two portraits, the careful drawing of the body laid out for viewing is as formal as the family and public ritual of death. The artist first son is fulfilling the first of his many duties; his emotion is being channeled into his family devotion. I have always felt that this series of drawings was one of the ultimate examples of the courageousness of my father's art. I am reminded of Akira Kurosawa's definition of an artist as one who does not turn away. Charlot could look at death fixedly.

Charlot adored his father and suffered grievously through his illness and death. He to Anita Brenner spoke about the event and its affect on him:

Jean is all on edge, just curled up like an armadillo and determined to stay in the painful dark. Says after all this year was difficult for him...that in it he lost the only two people he cared anything about, that is, his mother and me...But it is damn hard on him. Ever since he was sixteen, when his father fell ill and the family fortune fell to the dogs, he's had it hot and hard. The war, which he went to at the age of eighteen....Then Mexico, the loss of the possible fortune of his uncle....Starvation days, insults, uncertainties...Mother's diabetes...And one after another the things that tie him to the ordinary world are cut. So now he's a typical dementia precox possibility. Well, more than possibility. But I never saw a person so lost in the world as he. There never was one. (Glusker 2010: 719, Aug 19, 1929)

he told me that his father went insane, just before the war, at the period when suddenly the business went to pot and the family business went to pot and the family began to crumble. In many ways Jean stopped at that moment; and it has been very painful growing away from it. (Glusker 2010: 745, Oct 12, 1929)

Charlot did not suffer a breakdown as he did later when his mother died. But his condition was serious enough for his mother to send him on a trip to Brittany in the summer of 1915 to give him some relief from his duties and the strain.

Charlot's mental turmoil is indicated by an upsurge in the disturbing mental images that rose from his unconscious throughout his life; in this case, several seem to be childhood subjects transformed by a disturbed imagination. Charlot's first portrait of his sick father has been pasted onto a sheet of heavy purple paper. On the verso, are the remains of a pencil drawing with highlights in white chalk: *long-legged creature and little animal*. Charlot described it to me as a "fantastical thing like preying mantis. Like bugs and things swimming" ("Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work"). As stated earlier, the image is based of an illustration by Maurice Sand in George Sand's *Histoire du Véritable Gribouille* (1851: 28), one of Charlot's childhood books. The boy Gribouille has a dream in which he himself becomes a fly and the valet de chambre of his host becomes a spider ready to devour him. The uniform of the valet begins to look like the carapace of a spider, and the illustration shows this spider-man climbing his large web. Charlot's image retains the form of the costume, but extends the legs and arms and splays them out further. The hands and feet, which are fairly normal in the illustration, are made larger and beastlike. Charlot is pushing the illustration further into the uncanny and the frightening.

Two other drawings can be connected to this image: *Four monstrous faces underwater with aquatic plants* and *Caricature of a man with two protruding teeth*.⁸ Charlot said of these: "caricature of man and floating creatures. Not intended to be fun. = dream creatures. Can't give date" ("Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work"). The former drawing resembles Charlot's childhood aquarium scenes, with monstrous heads instead of fish. The watery setting is defined by the blue paper, wispy aquatic plants, and waving horizontal lines in a lighter blue, a device similar to the ones used in *Juvenilia 1904*. On the right is an elephant's head in profile with curlicues under the neck that might represent blood (as in a Mexican-Indian convention). The head wears a sailor cap with "p.s." on the band. The face glares malevolently into the tank, its yellow eye casting a ray into the water. The absence of tusks is curiously opposed to the emphasis on teeth elsewhere in these works. At the middle bottom, the head of an American Indian—with shaved head, feather headdress, and odd earring—recalls another of Charlot's childhood subjects. His long nose is almost elephantine, and from his big lips, colored red, two large teeth protrude. His expression is blank. At the middle top, an old man's face—with a tuft of hair and beard, carbuncled nose, and toothless mouth—presses itself insistently forward as if wanting to chatter something at the viewer. Such pressing faces were typical of Charlot's dream images. The final head on the left seems crossed with an elephant: big ears, long nose, thick smiling lips, and huge eyes. Instead of hair, an upside down mouth tops the head. Two teeth rise upward, showing that the second mouth is upside down; two little faces are on the teeth, but they are right-side up in relation to the whole drawing. The subject of *Caricature of a man with two protruding teeth* is definitely human. He wears an eighteenth-century ponytail, but is no representative of the Enlightenment. The composition is an extreme geometric distortion: a huge nose "balances" the pony tail, forming an arch; a second arch below them is formed by two enormous protruding teeth and a scrawny neck. The worried eyes look up at something bigger that is frightening: reason distorted by fear.

Anne's feelings may have been manifesting themselves in similar ways, if Charlot's report can be ascribed to this period:

she certainly was a very devout person and added somehow her dreams that were meaningful to her and of course can be taken as being perfectly natural, but tied up with what already I had as not a personal mystical experience, but knowing people who were true mystics. I remember my mother, for example, speaking of, in dream, of having an angel bring her a bouquet of red flowers, I think, and she knew enough about the symbolism of colors to know that the red had something to do with martyrdom, and it was indeed a time in which she suffered a lot. That type of thing. 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)

No contemporary record survives of Odette's feelings, but in the early 1960s, she spoke to me of her father with great emotion, the only one of her parents to whom she felt attached.

Charlot's own mood can be found in other artworks of the period, such as his *Three Studies of a Dead Bird*, done around December 1914, on which Charlot commented:

bird. Entered by open window and died, or was DOA.

Ca. 1914

= artist's left hand. Drawing with right.

Some Hokusai drawings of birds in *Bing* that had impressed me.⁹

I have described Charlot's special relationship with birds and the prominent place they occupied in his childhood artwork. In his comment, Charlot himself recalls his childhood absorption in Hokusai. The first drawing is probably the double depiction of the bird with its wings folded; this is the bird as Charlot found it, stiff and dead. He picks the bird up tenderly in his left hand, and it almost seems alive as it nestles there like a pet; a hint of life can be suspected around the eyes. Charlot spreads out its wings so its original glory can be appreciated; the angel wings of Charlot's liturgical works and his *L'Amitié* will be anatomically informed. These carefully detailed, life-size drawings are portraits of an individual bird; Charlot is studying it and thus preserving it. If God can note the fall of a sparrow, Charlot can memorialize it. In our interview of September 21, 1970, he stated:

But I think 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. And if I do a portrait, it's not a very different affair.

Just as in his portraits of his sick father, he is thinking about death and about his own situation. In a poem he wrote on the occasion—*Les astres d'or !*, grouped with poems dated December 1914—he draws a clear connection between the bird and his situation: does he himself weigh even as much as this dead bird in his

hand? No, he would be nothing if God had not taken him to form in his anguish. Sorrow presses a man and twists him in his vice:

Et c'est dur lorsqu'elle le griffe un peu trop fort,
Un peu trop tôt.
'And it's hard when sorrow grips him a little too strongly,
A little too soon.'

All of Charlot's poems from this period are expressions of his varying emotional responses to his situation. Some are simple cries of anguish, "cris de stupides douleurs!" 'cries of stupid hurts!' ¹⁰ His problem is no longer the ennui of his earlier poems as seen in this one written around September 1914:

J'ai pleuré, j'ai gémi d'angoisse
dans la nuit
le rets se tend, l'aile se poisse.

Je ne suis plus triste d'ennui,
mais la serre
d'effroi me harcèle et me nuit.

le fouet du doute me lacère
'I wept, I groaned with anguish
in the night
the net stretches out, the wing gets stuck on pitch.

I am no longer sad with ennui,
but the grip
of fear harries and damages me.

the whip of doubt lacerates me.'

Charlot sees clearly that his childhood has been cut short, and his childhood was very important for him. In *Les portes qui s'ouvriraient sont roguées et fermées*, composed just before the poem that mentioned the dead bird, Charlot writes:

Ici jouait l'enfant riant du rire
Vivant et large
Maintenant sur la page vierge vient s'inscrire
Du sang aux marges.
'Here played the child laughing with a laugh
Living and wide.

Now on the virgin page had just been inscribed
Some blood in the margins.’

He has grown old before his time.

Moreover, Charlot has lost the security his father provided; he has been kicked out of his nest: *Jusqu’à ce jour j’étais resté au nid* ‘Up until that day, I had stayed in the nest’ (probably early 1915). Living earlier in comfort, his heart was timid and given to mockery; then God threw it out into torment where it learned anguish and doubt. Charlot mentions particularly his cares about his mother and finishes his poem with his own fears of inadequacy and disaster. Moreover, he and his family are now vulnerable to social disdain, fallen as they are from a high station (*Il est beau de porter le rire qui dédaigne*, 1915). Charlot will use this experience in describing the Holy Family after the death of Joseph in his poem *Je te veux chanter Marie* of October 9, 1919:

Jésus rouvrit la boutique
Et charpentier s’établit
Il n’avait grande pratique
Mais a petit appétit
Subsistaient Lui et sa Mère
D’une vie douce-amère
Sans que caquets de voisins
Ou brouille de parentage
oncles neveux ou cousins
ou calomniages nuisins
Eussent dans leur cœur partage.
Unis comme lierre au tronc
Trente ans d’âg’ subsisteront
‘Jesus reopened the shop
And established himself as a carpenter
He didn’t have much business
But had few desires
He and his mother subsisted
In a bittersweet life
without the neighbors’ chatter
or family quarrels
—uncles, nephews, or cousins—
or harmful calumnies
having part in their heart.
United like ivy to a tree trunk
They subsisted until he reached thirty years of age.’

Charlot will write later about this situation with fierce sarcasm:

Or moi qui étais un enfant “aristocrate” (encore que la mode en soit passée)—moi qui ai eu un guignol avec 20 personnages, un teddy-bear très gros, et un soldat de ma taille—je ne sais pas m’amuser sans jouets—comme font les enfants pauvres et les saints—et comme à mon âge et dans ma situation—on n’a plus de promeneuses ni de “nurse”—ma mauvaise humeur retombe sur moi-même et je me flagelle.— (*Notebook C 25-12-23*)

‘But I who was an “aristocratic” child (even though that fashion has passed)—I who had a puppet theatre with twenty figures, a very big teddy bear, and a soldier as big as me—I don’t know how to amuse myself without toys—as do poor children and saints—and since at my age and in my situation—one no longer has someone to walk one or a “nurse”—my bad mood falls back on myself and I scourge myself.—’

Charlot had discussed his own death at least since his April 1912 poem on the subject, studied earlier. Now his death seems even more thinkable, no matter how much his body seems young and sexual (*Madrigal I and II*, February 1916). He asks who will take care of him when he is dying, “si ce n’est aujourd’hui, c’est demain” ‘if it’s not today, it will be tomorrow’ (*La neige beige esseule les stèles*, July 1915). In *Sous ces rameaux couverts* of October–November 1915, he uses his early Greco-Parnassian style against himself and Greek religion: Tircis was the spoiled darling of the gods, but now they are burying him, incapable of dealing with death as Christianity can:

Dieux vains, notre pouvoir
Expire au seuil du gouffre
Nous ne pouvons savoir
 Combien tu souffres

Tes joies furent factices
Et ce corps, qui fut tien
Te livre à la Justice
 Du Dieu Chrétien !

‘Vain gods, our power
Expires at the edge of the pit.
We cannot know
 How much you suffer.

Your joys were factitious
And this body, which was yours,
Delivers you to the Justice
 Of the Christian God!’

Similarly, in the sarcastic *Sûr du progrès* of September 1914, Charlot writes:

L'art attique
ne plaît qu'au portique
de *Plutus*.

'Attic art
pleases only at the portico
of *Plutus*.'

Life now seems filled with death; indeed, the skeletal image from the medieval Dance of Death is recognized as life itself.¹¹ Even more strangely, Charlot develops the idea of death through the image of a mother, an after-taste of his earlier Decadent poetry (*Elle entre au coup de vent, lorsque le jour décline*, 1915).

Charlot fantasizes about escape with some love object, but realizes how unrealistic, immature, and indeed stupid that idea is:

Partons ! Nous sommes jeunes
vaillants...et sots.

'Let us leave! We are young
valiant...and stupid.' (*"Philis laisse ton bras,"* December 15 [1914?])

The childishness of the poem is calculated, recalling his earlier Parnassian poetry. The manly alternative is to do one's duty, suffering in silence, holding out until death, and remembering all the suffering of the war, especially among the young men fighting at the front. In acting thus, one wins a certain victory:

Dieu mon maître
Vous m'avez donné de faire ma tâche.
J'accepte avec joie et je vais m'y mettre
sans peur lâche,
votre Grâce
Seigneur, me donne courage et confiance¹²

'God, my master,
You have given me to do my task.
I accept it with joy and will apply myself to it
without cowardly fear,
your Grace,
Lord, gives me courage and confidence.'

Charlot applies this attitude to one of his worst fears: that he will be unable to continue his work in art. In one of his clearest expressions of his views on art, he states in the first line, *Il est beau de vivre pour l'art* 'It is beautiful to live for art':

Mais il me semble encor plus beau
Broyant sa plainte

Comme les serfs au long des plinthes
De s'ahaner jusqu'au tombeau. (September 1914)

'But it seems to me more beautiful
Crushing one's complaint
Like serfs working the length of plinths
To gasp up to the tomb.'

Charlot's main understanding and articulation of his situation was religious. Because he felt at the time that his main sin was pride, he interpreted his suffering as God's punishing and crushing that offense, an interpretation he was still articulating at least into the summer of 1916 (*Exhortation* I and II). His pride was inevitably connected to his achievements in art and to his hopes for a career: that vaulting ambition he worried about already in his childhood poems as an occasion of pride. His fears both for and about his artistry were, therefore, emotionally entangled during this period. Charlot opened his new collection of poems with a series of six sonnets that provide a detailed expression of his thinking on returning from Germany with his sick father. In the first, *Je suis sot, je suis un niais, je suis un fou*, he despises himself for his incapacity for practicalities, his lack of a profession, his laziness, and his pride. Once he believed in his genius, and his artistry painted a luxurious future; now he has been cast down, his soul gripped by money worries. His dream collapsed, why is he paralyzed by cowardice? Now is the time to reject his poetic fantasies and act. In *ô mon Dieu donnez-moi la force de me taire*, he asks God to take from him his visual and literary arts. His love of beauty and candor are no help in the tasks he now faces:

stupide, je tremblais au seuil du grand Mystère,
et mon regard scrutait les astres, solitaire.
Eh bien, je fermerai les yeux, comme les autres !

'stupefied, I trembled on the threshold of the great Mystery,
and my gaze scrutinized the stars, solitary.
Ah well, I'll close my eyes like the others!'

He sees the situation clearly but cannot abandon the beauty that he feels so keenly, although it can lead only to failure and poverty:

"Hélas ! tant d'astres d'or étincellent sur nous
que je n'aimerais point que mon regard se baisse."
"Alas! so many golden stars sparkle over us
that I would in no way want to lower my gaze." ("Bah ! délaisse la pensée
impuissante et vaine")

He would be losing what is special about him; even if he could become rich, he would be like all others and "me perdre enfin dans vos masses !" 'lose myself at last in your masses!' (*C'est fait. J'ai repoussé l'azur, et ce fardeau*). He can recognize the ideal of the simple person, like a good father who lives his normal life and dies in peace; but he himself cannot deny his difference:

moi, quand j'aurai creusé l'inanité des songes
moi, quand j'aurai mordu l'âpre pain des angoisses
moi quand j'aurai vécu jusqu'au bout ce mensonge
que me restera-t-il ? Le cercueil. "non, l'extase !" (*Enfant crois-tu que cela donne joie
et calme*)

'I, when I will have hollowed out the inanity of dreams
I, when I will have bitten the bitter bread of anguish
I, when I will have lived to the end of this lie
what will be left for me? The coffin. "no, ecstasy!"

In the last sonnet, *pourtant tu n'auras pas fait ton devoir, mon fils*, Charlot surrenders the conflict to God. He must do his duty, as all men must, and if he humbles himself and perseveres until the end, God will provide the just recompense:

pourtant tu n'auras pas fait ton devoir, mon fils
l'homme est malheureux. Il ne sied qu'on le soulage
il rêve aussi mais ne rue pas devant l'ouvrage.
c'est moi qui l'ordonne : il m'en offre les prémices.

Humilie-toi. Courbe ton cœur au sacrifice.
Humilie-toi, Durci ta paume et broie ta rage.
Avoue-toi lâche, avoue ta peur que tu ménages.
tu ne t'abaisseras jamais assez mon fils.

Ahane las sans songer à la récompense,
(Surtout ne cherche pas le bonheur, il fuira).
ahane sans geindre. que ta vie se dépense

ahane tout le jour terrestre, un soir luira
où ton corps fourbu au cercueil se détendra
où ton âme, au Jardin mystique, jaillira.

'Nonetheless, you will not have done your duty, my son.
Man is unhappy. It is not right to console him.
He also dreams but does not run before the storm.
It is I who ordain it: he offers me the first fruits.

Humble yourself. Bend your heart to the sacrifice.
Humble yourself. Harden your palm and crush your rage.
Confess your cowardice, acknowledge the fear that you keep inside yourself.
You will never lower yourself enough, my son.

Gasp with fatigue without thinking of reward,
(Above all, do not look for happiness; it will flee you).
Gasp without groaning. May you spend your life.

Gasp all the earthly day. An evening will light up
when your exhausted body will rest itself in the coffin,
when your soul will surge out into the mystic Garden.'

However, the inner conflict continued. In *Bienheureux les cœurs purs Seigneur* (around September 1914), Charlot envies the simple people—"Blottis dans la Foi" 'hunkered down in the Faith'—who have done their duty and "n'ont jamais franchi la limite permise" 'have never trespassed over the permitted limit'; they will receive the promised joy. But will God be deaf to more complicated people like himself?

Seigneur mais à ceux-là qui ne voient pas, à ceux
Qui tremblent, la moiteur fiévreuse au front soucieux
D'ouïr mélancolique, et lourde, bruissant d'astres
Fantôme de folie et courrier de désastre

...

A ceux-ci qui tremblent en vain cherchant à t'aimer

'Lord, but for those who do not see, for those
Who tremble, with feverish clamminess on their careworn brow,
To hear melancholy and heavy, rumbling of stars
Phantom of madness and messenger of disaster

...

For those who tremble in vain seeking to love you'

A series of poems from October 1915 continues the same themes: *J'ai connu votre poing sur mon épaule, Maître; ô Maître j'ai connu le fouet de vos lanières; Et je sais que ceci m'atteindra sans férir.*

Charlot did know moments of happiness. In May 1915, he found himself to his surprise invaded by the happiness of spring:

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.

'And now see how Spring, the month
of May awakes with a smile that smells

Of sap, and I would wish that all its power brush
My closed eyes, swooned beneath the spreading apple tree,
To let this naïve child's heart of mine
Jump for joy.'

When the family moved to Saint Mandé in June 1915, Charlot was at first disturbed by its bourgeois suburban character, but then found himself strangely at peace in the garden, feeling freed of the usual troubles, lies, and poses of city life (*Ô le calme du jardin* June 1915; *Le ciel était bleu*). Charlot could know even moments of religious peace. In *Il pleut dans la rue, pleut sans cesse* of September 1914, God comforted him when he prayed:

J'ai peur. Seigneur donne-moi la force
car j'ai peur de tomber en faiblesse.

'I'm afraid. Lord, give me strength
for I fear to fall into weakness.'

Again in early 1915, he feels:

Seigneur vous m'avez donné la paix
La paix dans la tourmente

'Lord, you have given me peace
Peace in the storm'

In *Comme au clair de lune / un jet d'extase*, written at about the same time, he praises God:

Comment versez-vous à chaque cœur
Le baume attendri de l'Espérance !

'How you pour into each heart
The piteous balm of Hope!'

Such expressions can be found in other poems as well, such as *Je veux vous remercier depuis que j'ai suivi* of June 1915.

Charlot's references in his poems to financial problems are prominent with reason. Very practically, the breakdown and death of Henri spelled the eventual ruin of the family:

Father was a businessman, and his import-export for a while was quite successful. When he got sick, of course, it went to the dogs, but because he was sick. And we were a large family. (Interview November 18, 1970)

We had lived, of course, with the money that my father made at his business. His business was really imports, and he depended on a German firm for his imports from China. That was his big business. So with the war and the Franco-German War, that was the end of his business, and he really withered and died as a result. Then we

found ourselves with enough of a little sum of money to live a while. (Interview October 18, 1970)

Louis Goupil had apparently never been a good businessman and was certainly too old now to manage the family affairs; on the contrary, he would remain a dependent of the family until his death. The burden thus fell on Anne as the widow and on Jean as the oldest male, neither of whom was equal to the task.¹³

Charlot never understood capitalism. When he was paid for his 1951–1952 mural *Early Contacts of Hawai'i with the Outside World* in the Bishop Bank, he deposited the check in his account at the rival bank. Even as a child, I found this odd. “It would have been insulting,” he explained, “to take the money and put it right back in.” As late as 1966, he felt he had to make excuses for depositing his checks in the same bank that paid him. The word *insulting* in the above quotation seems to belong to the world of nobility and honor; Charlot several times expressed his sympathy for the medieval condemnation of banking as usury. Charlot did make one interesting remark: “Capitalism has no defence against money.”

Similarly, Charlot was always puzzled by people who chose money-making as a vocation and even more by the fact that they were considered the practical ones. He once spoke of “businessmen with their four feet on the ground.” This puzzlement can be felt in the four profiles of an old bureaucrat in “Administration Générale”: covering a spectrum from realism to caricature, the drawings display a pale, boney character from out of a nineteenth-century novel. With bureaucrats and businessmen, Charlot was out of his element.

Odette, as the daughter, was apparently excluded from the family business although she was marginally more practical. Charlot and his mother would maintain the family finances by selling assets, and the only reason the decline was spread over so many years was the amount of goods accumulated by a rich family of the period. Indeed, Anne and Jean would finance their beginnings in Mexico with the various saleables they brought with them:

what money we had in two parts. One went to my sister as a dowry, which was the proper thing to do at the time, and with the other half we paid, of course, the trip to Mexico. And my mother brought in some fashions, hats and things, that she sold in Mexico, and so that we got a little cash out of those sales. She was the person actually who had the job there. (Interview May 14, 1971)

In fact, Charlot was still turning to the last of the family goods in the 1930s: “And one day when I was very poor, I had tried to sell him one of the remaining jewels that my mother had left me” (Interview December 1, 1970).

Odette remembered with bitterness Anne and Jean rolling up the Oriental rugs to be sold. A contract survives from December 15, 1920, between Anne and a merchant couple in Paris: she will provide a stock of “plumes brutes” ‘untreated feathers’ for them to sell; she receives a down payment of 10,000 francs and up to 20,000 as the feathers are sold. Moreover, both Anne and Jean were too trusting. In a memorandum by Odette, written at least thirty years after the event, she enquired of a childhood

friend about a safety deposit box. On leaving for Mexico, Anne had given full power of attorney to a Mr. Fournier, whom Odette read much later was condemned for fraud. Odette had not heard of the man and did not know where her mother had met him, but earlier she had neglected to accept the invitation of a bank at Saint Mandé to attend the opening of a safety deposit box requested by Fournier. She had never heard of this box and guessed that it might have contained the family silver—which was “fort belle” and had disappeared—and her brother’s platinum stocks (Charlot himself would still be seeking them in 1964).¹⁴ Her friend replied that after thirty years, no complaint could be lodged.

Odette’s efforts continued after the war. Arlette wrote to Zohmah Charlot on August 11, 1989:

After the 1^{er} War they had a great process.

I think remember Tribunal of La Haye Holland.

Many trains with merchandises from different country was in transit, when the war was declared. Nothing was arrived to receiver.

All the expeditors wanted to be payed.

During many years my mother was with international Avocats. problem.

I think only about 1930 the verdict said: “Dommage de guerre” accident of war.

It was a terriable problem finish about many money.

On a letter from her lawyer, J. Sarraute, of November 5, 1935, Odette has written: “Succes[sion] H Charlot terminée” ‘Inheritance H. Charlot finished.’ In response to this news, Charlot wrote to Odette from New York City (n.d.):

La nouvelle de la fin du procès de la succession de Papa est une bonne nouvelle.

C’est une chose qui m’avait bien tourmenté toutes ces années.

‘The news of the end of the trial of the inheritance of Papa is good news. It’s something that has really tormented me these last years.’

Problems related to the inheritance would continue to arise into the old age of both Odette and Jean.

Charlot’s remarks on *Five Sheets of Images of Paris in August 1914* indicate that the family was still living in the apartment on the Chaussée d’Antin; this is implied also in the remarks on *Six Small Sheets of Watercolors of Paris in September 1914*. A number of documents were written from that address, such as Charlot’s letter to the Bibliothèque Nationale requesting access to the Goupil Collection, dated November 17, 1914; a card permitting him to use certain facilities for physical exercise, dated February 1915; and permission to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, dated March 9, 1915. However, sometime before Henri’s death in September, they moved to 31 bis, avenue Alphand, Saint Mandé, which was then a fashionable, independent township just outside the old Paris city walls. The long, narrow, two-lane Avenue Alphand cut through the entire town, ending at the Bois de Vincennes: the villas and the wood Charlot would mention in his poems. Saint Mandé was charming, with its cobblestone streets and mostly low buildings and homes with well-kept gardens. The parish church was nearby, Notre-Dame de Saint-Mandé (now at 84, avenue Charles de Gaulle), built at the end of the nineteenth century in a Neo-Romanesque style with academic murals on either side of the apse. The Bois de Vincennes provided

good walking spaces and a larger landscape design than found inside Paris, a largeness that explains, I believe, Charlot's atypical watercolor, *Park Scene*, discussed in Chapter 6. The center of Paris was easily reachable by subway, and Charlot could do his reading during the ride.

The Charlots' house still exists at the crossroads of the rue du Commandant René Mouchotte, its style typical of Saint Mandé: three stories, the third mansarded, three windows on the upper two stories, and two with a central door on the first. Over the front door is a fancy little roof of wrought iron and glass; concrete steps lead up to the front door. The house is connected fully on one side to the identical neighboring house. The front garden facing the two streets is enclosed by a splayed, three-cornered wall with a stone base, brick pillars, and iron siding; an iron gate with a wrought-iron decoration forms the central wall and faces the crossroads. Charlot painted the house and garden several times, notably in his *L'Amitié* of 1921. Originally, the house had a long backyard that ended with a small detached house that Charlot used as a studio. Such yards and rear structures are found in neighboring houses, but the rear of the Charlots' has been destroyed by the construction of an alley and a modern building. The three nearest, original houses across the streets from the Charlots' have survived, although many in the neighborhood have been replaced. Charlot painted at least one of these from an upstairs window, probably from his bedroom. His oil painting of his room shows a sloping roof, indicating that he was situated on the third, mansarded floor. After Henri's death, I believe he moved into a new room or into his detached studio, where he painted a watercolor of Louis Goupil. Henri's death probably occasioned some displacements.

Although the new house was large by modern standards—and Charlot would occupy both a bedroom and a studio—the move may have been intended as an economy measure: a come-down from having an apartment in the middle of Paris and the use of a summer place in Poissy, which is no longer mentioned in the documents and seems to have been liquidated. Charlot's hermetic poem, *Donc ces villas et ce bois*—dated June 1915 and provided with the note “en arrivant à St. Mandé” ‘on arriving at St. Mandé’—records his thoughts on occupying his new home:

Donc ces villas et ce bois
 c'est la loi
 qui borne mon existence.

 ‘So these villas and this wood
 are the law
 that limits my existence.’

He will try to suppress the turbulent negative feelings caused by the friction between his dreams and his situation and live a normal work-a-day life. But the poem ends with the image of a white bird that takes off suddenly from the vegetation, avid for the vivid air and thickly growing plants of deep lakes, only to be shot down and fall into the mud. Charlot did not, however, become a prisoner of suburbia and seems to have gone frequently into the city, where he studied and worked. Moreover, with his naturally positive temperament, he came quickly to appreciate the peacefulness of Saint Mandé, as seen in poems mentioned above. Charlot also began to depict his new home just as he had his earlier ones. The earliest surviving

example is a drawing of his new bedroom, done probably shortly after he moved in.¹⁵ Charlot identified the subject in the early 1970s: “bedroom at Saint Mandé. Stand to keep big drawings” (“Jean Charlot’s Notes on Early French Work”). Bold pencil strokes depict a Spartan, undecorated, even monk-like room. Later Charlot would paint a series of oils around the house, which I discuss below.

At sixteen, Charlot had been thrust into the position of the male head of the family, and he took his responsibilities seriously. First, he left the Lycée Condorcet to help the family. When I asked him why he had not finished his studies, he answered:

Well, because I was in the middle of them when father died, and we just tried to live on a minimum, and we had to cut whatever expense the school represented, and I tried to find jobs to help the family. I told you that for one day, at least, I had been an accountant in a firm, but I wasn’t obviously made to be an accountant. (Interview October 18, 1970)

Charlot appreciated and enjoyed education and scholarship, and he continued to regret his lack of a finished formal education. As late as November 4, 1918, in his poem, *Madrigal : Madame, voici ma chair et voici mes os*, he laments: ‘Or, n’ayant pas mes bachots j’ai peu de science’ ‘But not having my baccalauréat, I have little learning.’ A *baccalauréat* degree was socially as well as professionally desirable in France, so Charlot was risking his prestige as well as his career. Indeed, his lack of a *baccalauréat* was in all likelihood a reason he was not accepted as a regular, studio student at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts.

Charlot also tried to find paying work as an artist, which led to a quasi-encounter with Jean Cocteau:

Cocteau was having a magazine. It was in the war, and I must have been sixteen at the time, early in the war. And he had a magazine in which he was writing, making drawings for it, and asking a few of his friends to work in it. He had a Nijinski drawing, by the dancer Nijinski, which I liked very much. And at the time I was really looking for a job, so I decided to bring some of my drawings to Cocteau. I knew a young man who was a friend of Cocteau, and there was no introduction, but he made it possible for me to go and ring the bell. And Cocteau had a superb butler, who looked like a movie-type butler. Cocteau was very wealthy. And so the man received me, and I said I wanted to show my work to Mr. Cocteau, and he said, “Well, I doubt very much Mr. Cocteau will see you, but leave your drawings and so on and come back.” (I think the next day.) So the next day I decided to wait and go there not too early. I think it was 10:30, 11:00, in the morning when I went there. That same butler was rather horrified and said, “Well, Mr. Cocteau is asleep.” So, I had there the portfolio of drawings. They obviously had not been opened. And there was a rather whining voice from Cocteau in his bedroom, saying, “What is it?” He had heard the noise, the disturbance, so the butler went and talked with him, and he came back and said, “Well, Mr. Cocteau cannot receive you.” Then he gave me the portfolio, and obviously sort of liked me even though he didn’t depart from his butlerish ways, and

he said, “May I give you advice?” I said, “Oh, yes, please give me advice.” He said, “Have you read Balzac?” And I was ashamed I hadn’t read Balzac or things of Balzac he would know about, the *Physiologie* of this and that, so I said, “No, I haven’t read Balzac.” “Well, remember: to make money, you have to have money. To be successful you have to have money.” Then he opened the door and let me out. That was the end of my relationship with Cocteau. (Interview November 6, 1970)

The magazine would have been *Le Mot*, which began on November 28, 1914, and ran for eight months (Silver 1989: 44 f.). The butler’s reference to Balzac is to his novels of young naïfs coming from the country to Paris and being thoroughly plucked by urban cousins and acquaintances, the young and innocent being ground up by the system. The butler thought that Charlot clearly fit the role. Charlot’s inability to develop connections with possible patrons would be a problem all his life.

Despite Charlot’s efforts, his inadequacy for most of the practical tasks of managing the family must have been quickly apparent. Charlot was indeed acutely aware of his failings. In an “Essai sur mon état actuel” ‘Essay on my present condition’ of September 25, 1922 (*Notebook C* 1918–1923), he states that he has followed “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*.’ The reason for this is “*ruine* : Je reste riche en esprit. contraste avec la vie réelle” ‘financial ruin: I remain rich in spirit. contrast with real life.’ The real reason for the family’s financial *ruine* is thus religious: “mode de ruine : nettement surnaturel” ‘mode of ruin: clearly supernatural.’ He cites his prayer in the church at Saint Mandé, which he seems to quote in the next lines: he cannot dress or eat in the way he would desire; he cannot live in the setting that would please him because of his education. He admits: “Je n’ai pas la puissance de l’argent (même un peu)” ‘I do not have the power of money (even a little).’ That *puissance* is in fact “*Socialement la seule*” ‘*Socially* the only one.’ His reaction is thus both personal and social: “choqué dans tous mes goûts je me restreins au strict nécessaire. Fermer les yeux. inférieur socialement je m’isole” ‘shocked in all my tastes, I restrict myself to the strictly necessary. Close my eyes. socially inferior, I isolate myself.’ As a result, he feels “rancune de cela contre les hommes” ‘resentment for that against people.’ He feels the same resentment even “contre Dieu : du jour où je lui ai remis entièrement le soin de mon argent j’ai été ruiné” ‘against God: from the day when I confided to him completely the care of my money, I was ruined.’ That is, he had made an act of perfect trust in God, he had abandoned all his problems to God’s care, and had been disappointed in the results: “Côté argent : tout laissé à Dieu depuis St. Mandé” ‘Money side: all left to God since St. Mandé.’¹⁶

Another religious response may have originated at this time: Charlot’s devotion to St. John the Evangelist. Basing himself on John 13: 23–25, Charlot thought the saint was young at the time of the Crucifixion. But as Jesus was dying, he entrusted Mary, his mother, and John to each other (John 19: 26–27). Similarly, on Henri’s death, Charlot was entrusted with his mother and his immediate family. But he felt, as evidenced by letters written in Mexico, that she also took care of him, and she seems indeed to have been the practical family support for long periods. (Another aspect of the devotion is that Joseph had died before Mary, so Jesus had to assume some responsibility for her with his brothers and

sisters.) Charlot memorialized this devotion by naming me for John the Evangelist rather than John the Baptist, his own patron saint.

From the breakdown of his father through his early period in Mexico, Charlot suffered constant worry about the family finances on which his mother, his sister, and his grandfather depended. When the family goods were entirely liquidated in Mexico, Charlot and his mother experienced real poverty: “j’ai été un enfant riche.—et aujourd’hui je n’ai même plus assez pour étrenner une fille—” ‘I was a rich child.—and today I don’t have enough left to give a present to a girl—’ (*Notebook C* 25-12-23). Charlot’s early loss of his father left him with an emotional need for protection that manifested itself until late into his life as a desire—and ambivalent search—for patrons. Even worse than poverty was the loss of social status, even the social stigma, that afflicted a family in such circumstances, a point mentioned by Charlot in his poems. Discussing the reasons he and his mother emigrated in 1921, Charlot stated:

I felt more at ease in Mexico than in France because in France we really had let go both of the situation we had when my father was alive and perhaps of some friends that had depended a lot on that situation. There was a certain social standing that existed when father was alive, and I think mother, especially, suffered from having that shot from under us, so to speak, after the war and the death of my father. So it was easier, really, to be in Mexico than to be in France. (Interview May 14, 1971)

One of Charlot’s responses to the illness and death of his father was to intensify his relationship with his family as a whole, as if searching for an alternative basis for the emotional security he was losing along with his father. A manifestation of this is his selection of his grandfather Louis as a primary model over the next years; Louis had been only an occasional model before this period.¹⁷ As stated earlier, Charlot saw the family’s Aztec heritage in Louis’ eyes and jaw line, so by portraying him, he was studying his own ancestral past. Charlot might also have been worried that Louis would be the next to die.

The first example, *Bon Papa*, is dated November 1914, that is, in the early stages of Henri’s illness, and is close stylistically to Charlot’s first drawing of his sick father.¹⁸ Louis is sitting at a table, slumped in his chair. His elbow is planted on the table in front of his hat, and he is resting his head on his clinched fist. He is very well dressed, with a beautiful hat, wide cuffs, and very large cuff links, but the expression on his face is sorrowful, even anxious. The drawing of the eyes is remarkable: Louis’s left eye is up and alert as if following a conversation; the right eye is vague and downcast as if absorbed by inner worries. Strong diagonal strokes describe the clothes, while very delicate strokes for the face and hand communicate a sense of softness and vulnerability. One can imagine Louis thus during a discussion of the family predicament.

The next portrait of Louis is on the sheet of portraits of Henri described above and dated January 4, 1915. Louis has been sitting with the sick Henri and has gone to sleep. Charlot seems to have portrayed his open-eyed father and then turned in his chair to do Louis. Their portraits form a parallel, with the same fez and inclination of the head; Charlot is emphasizing their similarity and closeness. But Louis will not be able to take Henri’s place; he is weakened with age as Henri is by illness. *One sheet:*

two portraits of Louis Goupil sleeping may have been done on the same day or on one of many similar ones.¹⁹ Louis is in the same position, and Charlot has portrayed him in the top portrait with many lines and in the bottom one with very few. Louis's face in the latter portrait is peaceful; in the former, his brow furrows with worry even as he sleeps.

Apparently after Henri's death, Charlot redecorated his bedroom—or the studio into which he moved—from its monastic simplicity to a more cheerful room with bright colors and artworks and even a guitar. Significantly, the one person Charlot portrayed in the room was Louis: *Louis Goupil Seated in Jean Charlot's Bedroom*.²⁰ Louis has a slight smile, most rare in Charlot's portraits; he seems happy to be in the room. The family dog sits at his feet. Charlot seems to be bringing Louis into his private space, associating his grandfather more intimately with himself. As Charlot reconstitutes his life, he reaches out for contact with family members and others. Similarly, he will be visiting his wet-nurse and her family.

Another indication of Charlot's attempts at closer contact with his family as a whole is the beginning of his intensified study of the Goupil Collection. He had previously studied the *Atlas* of the collection and had even based on it a picture life of Napoleon. He would now study the originals themselves. Charlot was initially denied access to the collection because of his age. His letter demanding admission emphasizes his familial rights and is signed in the Spanish style with the maternal name, Goupil, after the paternal, Charlot:

17 Nov. 1914.

Monsieur le Directeur

Je vous écris afin de solliciter une carte d'admission me permettant d'étudier les manuscrits mexicains de la Bibliothèque. Ceux-ci sont un don de mon oncle, Mr. Eugène Goupil, américaniste distingué. J'ai étudié moi-même cette branche difficile de l'Histoire qu'est la période comprise depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion Espagnole; mais les Manuscrits figuratifs, seuls restes de cette époque, sont d'une importance capitale. N'ayant pu les approfondir que d'après les reproductions incomplètes du catalogue raisonné j'eus le désir de voir les Originaux dont mon oncle s'était dessaisi pour les léguer à la Nation. Malheureusement on me fit savoir qu'il fallait des titres spéciaux pour être admis à étudier. Or je n'en ai d'autres que l'envie de perfectionner ma science si imparfaite de l'américanisme ! Malgré cela, Monsieur, j'ose espérer que vous répondrez affirmativement à ma demande et que vous m'autoriserez à étudier des documents que j'aurais déjà entre les mains s'ils n'avaient pas quitté ainsi ma famille.

Agréez Monsieur le Directeur l'assurance de mes respectueux hommages.

J. Charlot Goupil

Mr. Jean Charlot 64 rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, Paris.

Nov. 17, 1914

Dear Director,

I write to you in order to ask for an admission card that would allow me to study the Mexican manuscripts of the Bibliothèque. These are a gift of my uncle, Mr. Eugène Goupil, the distinguished Americanist. I myself have studied this difficult branch of History, the period from the origins to the Spanish invasion; but the figurative manuscripts, the only remnants of this important period, are of capital importance. Since I have not been able to study them in depth except by means of the incomplete reproductions of the *catalogue raisonné*, I wanted to see the Originals of which my uncle dispossessed himself in order to bequeath them to the nation. Unfortunately, I was informed that special entitlements were necessary to be admitted to study. But I have none other than the desire to perfect my so imperfect knowledge of the field of American Studies. Despite that, sir, I venture to hope that you will respond affirmatively to my request and that you will authorize me to study the documents that I would already have in hand, if they had not left my family in the way described.

Respectfully,

J. Charlot Goupil'

A fragmentary marginal note reads: “le signataire...en effet neveu de...Goupil, il semble qu'on...(n)e peut lui refuser une carte” “the signature...in fact the nephew of...Goupil, it seems that we...cannot refuse him a card.”²¹ Charlot received the necessary permission:

There was a letter saying, “please come,” that the department was open to me. When I arrived and could barely see over the desk, the curator with his long beard said, “Did you write that letter?” So I got permission to see the manuscripts. (Morse 1976: viii)

Charlot recalled the episode:

When I was very young, I must have been, I think, perhaps sixteen at the time—I know I was under age to get into the Bibliothèque Nationale and see the books—I wrote a letter to the director of the manuscript section, which was much more exclusive than the Bibliothèque Nationale, and told him I was ready to do a new catalog of the collection of my uncle, *catalogue raisonné*, and to let me go and look at the manuscripts. And the man, well, accepted, agreed, because those things had been the gift of my uncle, and I had written him a letter in which I said if he hadn't given them to you, they would be now in my hands. He was so astonished when I came—I wasn't a big guy, I was a young guy, I looked probably younger than I was at the time—because he had said yes. (Interview September 21, 1970)

In his memory, Charlot saw himself as very young and in fact at times predated the incident to his thirteenth year.²²

Charlot's purpose was no less than to write "a catalogue raisonné of the collection by the newest methods" using different sources.²³ Charlot's beginning research survives in a manuscript—"Notes for a Catalogue Raisonné of the Pre-Hispanic Codices in the Eugène Goupil Collection, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris." The notes suggest in their breadth that he envisioned his catalogue as a general commentary on the images. The second part of the manuscript is copied or summarized from Henri Ternaux-Compan's translation into French of the history of the Chichimecs by the Aztec writer Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl; the historical period recorded, Charlot noted on the typescript of the manuscript made in 1972, "overlaps with events in mss."²⁴ In Charlot's plan, Ixtlilxóchitl would have been one of several sources used for the catalogue raisonné.

The first part of the manuscript is a combination of notes and illustrations.²⁵ Charlot prepared himself at home by studying the plates of the *Atlas* and reading the commentary in Boban 1891, Volume 1, pages 75 ff., 84–138, from which he extracted lines and wrote summaries on sheets that he had detached from a small notebook, halved horizontally, and folded: "The manuscript was small because I was carrying it in my pocket" (Tabletalk early 1970s). He then took these sheets to the reading room of the manuscript department of the Bibliothèque Nationale, studied the originals, and added notes and copies to the sheets at his side.

The manuscript provides the earliest evidence of Charlot's study of Náhuatl, which began, in all likelihood, in childhood discussions with family and friends. In the 1950s and 1960s, Odette could discuss Aztec names, a knowledge she probably acquired in her family. Close to his death, Charlot was distressed when he had difficulty recalling the Náhuatl word for *warrior*.

Náhuatl is one of the most difficult languages in the world, primarily because of its complex, agglutinating word formation. Charlot analyzes Náhuatl personal and place names into separate words and meanings, basing himself on Boban and perhaps on other sources as well.²⁶ He sometimes glosses the words and sometimes provides only the Aztec. Moreover, Charlot was able to connect words to images, analyzing the corresponding personal and place glyphs into their individual visual components and connecting them to the verbal; that is, connecting the words in the composite names to the images in the name-glyphs. This was mainly original work, since the connection between individual word- and image-component is seldom mentioned by Boban. In 1972, Charlot guessed that he had accomplished this by looking closely at the original drawings and distinguishing simultaneously the verbal and image components. Charlot had been interested in combinations of words and images since his earliest childhood, and he found them here together in a perfected system. Moreover, the images themselves added a whole new level of meaning to the words, which Charlot used to enter into the thought world of the Aztecs.

This first part of the manuscript is most important as a record of Charlot's early study of Aztec art. The drawings are tiny and done in light pencil. Color notations indicate that he did not add the occasional light washes at the library but at home. That is, the line is primary and the color secondary. This was perhaps another influence in his own development at the time towards line composition as opposed to an Impressionist emphasis on color. Charlot is clearly studying Aztec art with perspicacity

and a broad background in art. He notes Aztec conventions, in this case, the opposite of Greek: “Pourquoi les femmes sont-elles plus brunes que les hommes ?” ‘Why are the women browner than the men?’ Analyzing a Náhuatl word, he questions the identification of the image: “C’est plutôt 1 grenouille qu’1 fourmi” ‘It’s more a frog than an ant.’ He compares to the art of other cultures; besides an image of a flower, he writes: “Est-ce japonais ?” ‘Is it Japanese?’

Charlot’s drawings are expert renditions of the originals with none of the Westernization of style found in the attempts of others. As such, they anticipate his archeological draughtsmanship of Chich’en Itza. More important, Charlot goes beyond mere copying to enter into the lively, narrative spirit of the originals. For instance, the babies in the mothers’ laps, although tiny in the drawing, are bursting with energy; the faces of the adults, although staying within the Aztec conventions, are expressive. Charlot is obviously an artist enjoying the work of a fellow illustrator and, later at Chich’en, will develop a genre of artistic homages to the artists he was copying during the working day. Throughout his years in France, Charlot continued his study of Mexican culture, including codices, as his later writings reveal.²⁷ Through the years, he managed to keep Hermann Beyer’s *Explicación de un fragmento de un antiguo plato decorado de Cholula* (1919), which he owned and read in France.

A new catalogue raisonné of the Goupil Collection would have been an immense task, and the project shows that Charlot was committing himself at this time to a life of scholarship as well as art. He was particularly interested in catalogues and started to write a complete one of the prints of José Guadalupe Posada before he left Mexico City to work as an archeologist at Chich’en Itza. In 1958, Charlot finally wrote a catalogue of the portraits of Kamehameha by Louis Choris (1958). Charlot also made catalogues of his own prints and a checklist of his paintings, especially his oils. Charlot gave a large collection of his artworks, including very rare prints, to Sid Stallings at the Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs. I believe his intention was to establish as complete a collection as possible at that institution, but the works were sold at auction after Stallings’ death. This is the context in which an important project of Charlot’s can be understood: gathering and keeping through his many dislocations a great quantity of material for the study of his own work and that of his friends. Charlot focused particularly on historically important items that others overlooked, such as pamphlets, posters, and exhibition catalogs. His cataloguer, Peter Morse, called him a pack rat for keeping things that others threw away. On the other hand, he discarded materials from others that he considered too personal, like letters. Exceptionally, he kept Orozco’s letters, I believe because he much admired Orozco’s Mexican Spanish and because Orozco was an infrequent writer. Only after his marriage to a woman who kept her correspondence carefully—and after being urged by a staff member of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art—did Charlot begin to preserve the letters he received. Charlot was actively involved in founding the Jean Charlot Collection at the University of Hawai‘i, where the materials he gathered, now often the unique surviving examples, are housed.

Although Charlot left the Lycée and thus the normal course of education, he wanted to begin his higher studies in art at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, the premier institution of France, which traced its turbulent history from the royal academies of painting, sculpture, and architecture of Louis XIV. Untouched since the early nineteenth century by new movements in art, the Ecole was the bastion of

French academicism, instructing students in its methods and ideals. At the entrance on the rue Bonaparte to the court of the Ecole—surrounded by its heterogeneous buildings and architectural remnants—the student passes the presiding busts of Nicolas Poussin and Pierre Puget, respectively, the great painter and the great sculptor of the tradition. The basis of instruction was drawing—“la probité de l’art” ‘the probity of art,’ in Ingres phrase—first from plaster casts of famous works and then from the nude model. Charlot agreed with Classical art education that “*L’étude de la figure sera le point culminant d’une étude de la peinture*” ‘*The study of the figure will be the culminating point of the study of painting*’ (*Traité de la Peinture* 1920). In Cézanne’s words, “L’aboutissement de l’art, c’est la figure” ‘The culmination of art is the figure’ (Vollard 1919: 135). Charlot adhered to this view all his life: “The nude is an essential of great art, at least of great art as Western man understands it... Today, the nude remains an indispensable ingredient of much of modern art... In Western art, the nude remains the one constant that links together all styles” (October 26, 1966).

Students graduated finally to painting and participated in a series of competitions crowned by the Prix de Rome. The rigor and definition of the instruction along with the importance of honors for a future career often resulted in the suppression of individual creativity and innovation, as many of the Ecole’s critics argued. Only a strong artistic character enabled a student to absorb the Ecole’s instruction and use it for his own purposes. Charlot discussed the problem in regard to José Clemente Orozco at the Academy of San Carlos: “the conventional grind that forced him to take stock of his innate mastery”; “a thorough knowledge of perspective and anatomy was the one safe way eventually to throw both overboard” (Charlot November 1947 “Orozco”: 259). Nonetheless, the Ecole was centrally important for French culture and certainly alerted Charlot to the importance of the Academy in Mexico City, whose national significance he described in his *Mexican Art and the Academy of San Carlos, 1785–1915* (1962). Such a book is still lacking for the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts.²⁸

Since the Ecole offered a professional course, Charlot’s application indicates his final selection of art as his career. As stated earlier, the normal practice was for students at a *lycée* to complete an artwork in their graduation year and submit it to the Ecole. Charlot did this without graduating but was met with “the refusal of the Beaux Arts to accept my drawing of a plaster cast as an entrance examination” (Spring 1937). That is, he was not accepted as a regular student in one of the professors’ *ateliers* or studios. But the Ecole had a lesser category of student: they were permitted to work in the ground-floor galleries and the corridors, copying the plaster casts of sculpture from antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. The professors would visit them informally to criticize their work, a service they provided gratis out of devotion to the field.²⁹ The relevant document makes Charlot’s situation clear:

Ministère de l’Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts
Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts
Paris, le 9 Mars 1915.
N° 2049 d’inscription
M Charlot
Jean
né le 8 Février 1898 à Paris

demeurant à Paris, 64 rue de la Chaussée d'Antin

présenté par M. Patey³⁰

est autorisé à suivre les cours oraux, à étudier temporairement dans les galeries et à la Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts aux heures réglementaires ~~et dans l'atelier.~~

Valable jusqu'en 1928.

'Ministry of Public Instruction and the Beaux-Arts

Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts

Paris, March 9, 1915...

presented by Mr. Patey

is authorized to follow oral courses, to study provisionally in the galleries and at the library of the l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in regular hours [crossed out: and in the studio].

Valid until 1928.'

Charlot could properly describe himself as an "Elève Ecole des Beaux Arts," as he did on his *Carte d'Electeur* at Saint Mandé in 1920, and he was always perfectly clear about his secondary status at the Ecole; but other writers have not been aware of the distinction.

Charlot described his work at the Ecole:

As an adolescent I dutifully copied in charcoal the plaster casts strewn in the corridors of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts with a full-scale replica of Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment' for a backdrop. (*MMR* 180)

The Ecole contains an old and important collection of plaster casts of sculpture and architecture as well as original works saved from destruction, a collection organized during the French Revolution. Works include Greek and Roman statues, the Parthenon frieze, Medieval tombs, full-scale copies of the ceiling paintings of the Sistine Chapel, and numerous architectural details from different countries and periods. The collection is found throughout the diverse buildings of the Ecole, but Charlot's drawings were made in the plaster cast room—the Musée de la sculpture comparée 'Museum of comparative sculpture'—in the restored Chapelle de l'ancien couvent des Petits-Augustins 'Chapel of the former convent of the Petits-Augustins' of 1608. Although the casts have been moved to the walls, the Chapel is still as it was in Charlot's day: a long nave with a wide side chapel on the right, dark red walls and green columns. A full-scale copy of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* covers the far wall from ceiling to floor, while a high window on the left casts its light across it.

Charlot made two careful drawings of the whole *Hall of Casts at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, July 1915 and Christmas 1915.³¹ Both drawings are done, from different distances, of the end of the large chapel with the copy of the mural *Great Crucifixion* by Fra Angelico (another mural is visible high on the adjoining wall); students are copying casts of statues and architectural features. Charlot described, with some error, the room in his lecture "An Artist Looks Back":

the hall of casts...had been built specifically on the same plan and size than the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, because it was to house, in fact it did house, on the other side of the end that you see there, a life-size copy of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*. On this side, what you see is a life-size copy of the *Great Crucifixion* of Fra Angelico. There were also casts of course of sculptures besides the copies of paintings. So my first tries at, shall we say, good drawing were done under the double blessing, or so I hope, of Fra Angelico on one side and Michelangelo on the other. (March 8, 1970)

In a review of his own retrospective in 1966, Charlot wrote:

Copied actual size, Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" loomed threateningly over my beginner's every effort. Indeed, the resulting familiarity with its giant scale germinated in me a vocation for mural painting. (April 6, 1966)

Three other sheets of drawings have survived from Charlot's work at the Beaux-Arts. On the verso of two are study drawings that were truncated when Charlot cut the sheets to do the recto images: a rounded form, probably a head of hair, and *The Death Mask of Henri IV, cut off at eyes*, probably from a plaster cast.³² The three complete drawings are of students and objects in the chapel of casts; more affectionate, even humorous, genre scenes than copies.³³ *Hall of Plaster Casts, Gisants* uses the display of architectural fragments and a monumental tomb to create a strong foreground space with a secondary one seen through a columned window in the background. The contiguous spaces are thus delimited by different styles of architecture, an oddity found only in such a museum. An old, conservatively dressed woman with a cane bends towards the foot of the tomb figure, as if reading a label; her age also will pass into history. Charlot seems touched by the human poignancy of time.

Hall of Plaster Casts, two people working under Cellini's Perseus is a bold drawing done on heavy paper and protected by the flap of a fold.³⁴ A male and a female student, dressed in black, are sketching white casts placed against a richly red wall. The students are perched on their stools, each facing a large sketchpad set on a light wooden chair and leaned against its back. Charlot was still using such a chair at the end of his life. The woman is in voluminous work clothes and head cloth to protect her against the studio dust. She must adjust her legs against the unaccustomed chair in front of her knees and touches her sketchpad tentatively. The man, with his young artist's unruly hair, splays his legs fearlessly out beyond his chair and seems to lean into his sketchpad for the attack. The woman looks up at the flaunted nudity of the *Perseus*, who seems to be posing especially for her. At her back, the heads of three saints seem to look over her shoulder at her work. Attached to the column on the facing wall, the bust of a worldly woman seems to look more at the young artist than his drawing. The plaster casts seem spectral, benignant presences, even lively participants in the process of art. Their varying glances form a compositional X that serves to unify the heterogeneous objects, assembled as if by the humor of the history of art.

Hall of Plaster Casts, Copy of Last Judgment and Casts pleased Charlot enough to be pinned for a while to his wall, as attested by the holes in the corners.³⁵ Composed on a narrow vertical, the careful

drawing describes the upward sweep of space at the end of the hall occupied by *The Last Judgment*. Far below on the shadowed floor, a uniformed guard ignores two women sitting on their portable stools before their sketch pads. Casts of statues and architectural elements lead the viewer up into the space above them. The twin statues on the right start just above the woman's pedestal-like hat. A higher, lighter statue on the left continues the movement upwards indicated by its dramatic gesture. Beside it, the engaged pilaster continues the movement to the arched ceiling and half hides the window shedding its light on the heaven of Michelangelo. Human beings seem too small to experience the ecstatic elevation of art, but—most likely a touch of humor—the color of the woman's dress is the same as that of the flesh in *The Last Judgment*. All these drawings show how happy Charlot was studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; he would later describe the enjoyment he felt walking along the quais to the school

Charlot graduated at some point to life classes, which were given in large studios with outsized windows. The nude model would pose on a platform, and the students would group themselves in front or around it. Two stylistically atypical, academic nudes might be remnants of Charlot's study at the Ecole: *Studio Female Nude* and *Studio Male Nude, Shoulder and Arm*.³⁶ Anatomical features are described in a nineteenth-century academic manner, especially for the male model with the supplementary drawing of the shoulder and bent arm. This latter section might be a correction; Charlot wrote, "Any departure from factual objectivity meant a scolding and a correction of my drawing by the hallowed hand of the master" (April 6, 1966). The only unusual features are the felt bulk of the woman—Charlot's characteristic interest in volume—and the focused portrait of the man's face. Charlot got caught up in the male model as an individual; indeed, in the nineteenth-century photos of models, the faces with their hard histories often distract from the bodies. These two drawings are without the stylization Charlot brought to his later nudes; indeed they can be used as a baseline for those. A final drawing, *Study of male head*, is clearly a geometric study of a strong bald head; analytic lines are drawn even when not connected to the physical form, such as the line from the farthest tilt of the head to the shoulder.³⁷ But Charlot has been caught up by the face's medieval sense of age and suffering: odd, fleshy mouth, abused ear, and hollow, anguished eyes. The hard skeletal geometry of the bald pate deteriorates progressively through the bags under the eyes, the knobby nose, the heavy mouth, and the folds of skin hanging under the chin. The soft flesh sags loosely over the hard bone as if preparing itself for the corruption that will finally separate them. The drawing takes on a passionate sweep, like the long line at the back of the neck. Geometry tells a story for Charlot that drives his hand. The result is classical in its resemblance to a pitilessly realistic Roman portrait statue.

Charlot's relating the flesh to the bone was Classical: nude study was inseparable from anatomical. Students would study skeletons and muscles as much as skin. Charlot acquired an expert knowledge of human anatomy and a lifelong wonder at the beauty of the body. I remember in the early 1950s going through one of his anatomy books and asking him why anyone would want to look at those drawings of flayed bodies. In a loving tone, he described to me the muscles and how they were shaped and attached to perform certain functions; as he spoke, his fingers almost caressed the muscles he was discussing. When C. S. Lewis described the insides of the body as ugly, Frank Sheed wrote: "Charlot was more indignant over this than over anything in any other of our books. He denied that the sights inside a

healthy body are ugly—the colors are beautiful” (n.d.). Charlot’s appreciation of skeletons and innards is easily related to Aztec religion and art in which they were displayed prominently.

Charlot felt that his study at the Beaux-Arts was important in connecting him more closely to French traditional art; he had experienced the academy from within, while it was still largely the same as in the nineteenth century. The Beaux-Arts also encouraged his movement from his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist periods toward the more geometric compositions that would characterize his later work:

My teachers were not Post-Academic; they were definitely Academic teachers. I went to the Beaux-Arts school. There were two kinds of students at the Beaux-Arts: some had proved themselves and were in one of the studios of the major Academicians. They were definitely Academicians of the time. I think Bouguereau had just died or was fading out, and a man like Gérôme, for example, and so on and so forth. But those same Academicians would go and correct in the corridors, as they are called, of the Beaux-Arts, and I was making my drawings at the time in those corridors, and the Academicians would take turns in correcting the people who had not proved themselves and could not get into one of their studios to study. So I really learned a lot from men who by then were quite old. Some had been born in the 1830s and so on. Well, I remember mostly the Bouguereau and Gérôme people because they represented all the others, and I think there was not too much individuality you could see within them. But even so, the corrections of those people of my drawings allowed me to work under men who were mostly nineteenth century men who had been untouched even by Impressionism and, of course, abhorred anything from Impressionism on. Post-Impressionism for them was probably something to laugh at, and Cubism for them remained unborn. I suppose they all died soon after they taught me because I remember them so very, very old. Maybe they were not, but they cultivated all kinds of fantastic long beards, white beards or would-be white beards that trailed around. It was at the time, I suppose, a badge of their being Academicians as against the, what we could call the “hippy” ways of the younger painters. But I am very grateful to them because they made alive for me a period that had been untouched by Impressionism, that was still very intense about what they called the drawing, that is, an exact sort of a drawing where everything took a certain architectural cast and certain architectural exactness. And I’ve always kept, actually, closer to those people or, if you want, what they told me at the time about drawing with that architectural flavor has remained more essential to my art than the things that I learned from the Post-Impressionists. I did some landscapes in a Post-Impressionist way, but the relation of, let’s say, shadows and sunlight and so on were never to me as important as that good, solid drawing of the Academicians. And in a way, when I came to Cubism, that is, a faceted Cubism, I recognized in it many of the things that the Academicians had taught me, that is, that tendency to become an

architectural blueprint. And for the Cubists, it's of course because they were in reaction against the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists that they considered oldfashioned. The Cubists were the last word at the time, and by so doing they rejoined, maybe without knowing it, the Academicians who had considered Impressionism and Post-Impressionism ridiculously modern. So one was just before, one was just after that period of art that took in the questions of blue shadows and yellow sunlight and so on. And even though I understood Post-Impressionism, I never was, we could say, one of them. And if I had to say what my makeup as a mural painter is, I think there is a very definite scaffolding of, well, postulates that come in equal parts from the old Academicians and from the Cubists. (Interview September 19, 1970)

Charlot added to this description in his lecture "An Artist Looks Back" of March 8, 1970: the Beaux-Arts:

was a very interesting, very interesting place, completely old-fashioned as far as studying art went. I had there—of course I was quite young—I had there ancient professors, who looked to me like they all were at least a century old. They had enormous long white beards, and my remembrance is that they step on their beard as they walk, because they were bent in two. It's only later on that of course I found that those dear people were not really survivors, but that, let's say only ten years before, or a little before that, they were the people who had taught men like Georges Rouault and Matisse their craft of painting. I know that I am very grateful to those people for showing me what academic art means. Nowadays, academic art is not very well seen, but I am sure that there will be a re-estimate of academic art, which is a wonderful thing; certainly a wonderful discipline for the young man that I was.

The Beaux-Arts clearly supported Charlot's previous tendencies: "These men gave me forever a sense of reverence in the presence of the model, and a craftsman's understanding of the tools of the trade" (April 6, 1966). Most important, the experience of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts was, along with that of the Aztec codices, an influence toward the emphasis on drawing that would characterize Charlot's liturgical style:

I came out of my bath in academic art with good drawing in many ways. I think this portrait of my grandfather is an example of the severity, of the acceptance of the rule, that I had learned at the Beaux-Arts and in the Louvre. (March 8, 1972)

Charlot never lost his respect for Academic art and created a stir when he praised Bouguereau in 1932—already demonized in the history of art—for his craft, his clarity, his "splendid impersonality," his interest in nature, description, and storytelling, and his rationality; all qualities "severely opposed to the creeds in fashion."³⁸ The points Charlot selects for praise are clearly related to his own ideals.

Charlot's art study at the Beaux-Arts and with his private teachers must have included theoretical discussions and experiments in composition, two of his constant interests. Charlot would first publish on art in 1916, and his voluminous writings would eventually include general theories of art. Occasional

compositional diagrams can also be found. On the verso of *House and Garden*, which I date to 1913, a set of schematic lines seem to be exploring the effects of compositional tipping, the device of tipping verticals and horizontals until they become diagonals. On the verso of *Charlot's Bedroom at St. Mandé* of 1915, similar lines study the path of light through a lens. In any case, Charlot's own work reveals considerable research and experimentation from the beginning.

Charlot's experimentation must be understood in the context of his research; that is, he was in constant intellectual and productive dialogue with tradition. In many cases, his stylistic choices and composition can be fully understood only when their art-historical context is recognized. Two academic problems provide examples. The first is the treatment of a seated figure when seen from the front at the level of the knees or lower. In natural vision and in photographs, the knees and legs appear unnaturally large, and the academician either corrected for this effect by reducing their size or avoided the difficult pose.³⁹ Charlot discussed the problem in his 1920 *Traité de Peinture*, below. Significantly, he used the pose for central allegorical figures in his 1934 mural at the Straubenmüller Textile High School for the Humanities and his 1944 fresco *Time Discloseth All Things* in Athens, Georgia. In both cases, his treatment is closer to the uncorrected distortion of natural vision. The choice of subject and the treatment seem to be a deliberate comment on an academic problem. First, Charlot was indicating his opting for natural vision, part of his primary artistic basis in nature and observation and his more modern sensibility. Second, he was using that distortion for expression: the robe stretched between the legs forms a monumental block. He would use such optical distortion prominently in his 1921 masterpiece *L'Amitié*, discussed below. In sum, much of the point of Charlot's composition would be missed if its art-historical context went unrecognized. Charlot was indeed an artist who kept historical, technical, and craft problems constantly in mind.

Another academic problem was the relationship of singularity and general significance in historical painting. All historical events are singular, but they can have also a wider import or resonance. That larger significance can be attained through the choice of subject matter. *The Assassination of the Duc de Guise* seems more singular than *The Death of Socrates*. Even more important is the choice of treatment, which Charlot emphasized in his discussion of his first mural in Mexico, *The Massacre in the Main Temple* of 1922: the event was depicted as a symbol of two ways of life. Again, Charlot can be adequately understood only when his art-historical context is recognized. In Mexico, the continental United States, and the Pacific, Charlot would enter into a similar dialogue with non-Western art traditions, which form the background of his achievements in those areas.

Charlot was producing a good deal of other artwork at the time, including his illuminations in Régnier's *Le Miroir des Heures* and occasional portraits and landscapes, mostly undated.⁴⁰ These were in his matured drawing and watercolor styles, described earlier. A new emphasis is peopled urban scenes. Like many others, Charlot was finding it difficult at first to take the war seriously. Its manifestations in Paris seemed fatuous and jingoistic, as seen in his series *Five Sheets of Images of Paris in August 1914*.⁴¹ Charlot remarked on this and the next set, *Six Small Sheets of Watercolors of Paris in September 1914*:

= Chaussée d'Antin. Sr [series?] of little watercolors. Went to see what was going on. Preparations of Paris for siege. Didn't know what would happen. Putting up barriers. Found it all a little silly. Unusual enough to be amusing. ("Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work")

Three wash drawings are similar in style and technique. On one sheet, a Belgian soldier is depicted full-length looking like a stout, unheroic burgher. A slighter sketch of an "Officier belge" 'Belgian officer' makes a more martial impression. On the same sheet, Charlot draws carefully and labels the patriotic ribbons people were wearing, as if wanting to record them for posterity; he includes "*Ma rosette, faite par Odette*" 'My rosette, made by Odette.' Apparently people were wearing a miniature pig's head with a spiked German helmet: "Qui n'a pas sa tête de cochon !" 'Who doesn't have his pig's head!' Charlot's satiric view is even clearer on another sheet of small sketches with the labels "Les cravates patriotiques" 'Patriotic neckties'; "Confiserie" 'Confectionery'; "chaussettes françaises" 'French socks'; "Marchand de drapeaux" 'Flag merchant.' The ties, socks, and confectionery in patriotic colors are truly silly. More seriously, these subjects are the first indication of what will become a bitter resentment in Charlot and many others against war profiteering. Charlot's depiction of the seller of flags—done in gray, suggestive washes—is, however, mixed in its emotions: he is a poor street peddler pushing his cart, and he brings out in Charlot his deep feeling for the plight of the poor. The picture is a good example of how looking at a subject can modify the original intent of a work. A separate sheet is related to the above: *postiers mobilisés, chef d'orchestre* 'drafted postmen, orchestra conductor' and *1870 et 1914*.⁴² The musicians in the orchestra wave their arms from their carriage in an orgy of patriotic gesture. The dates refer to patriotic ribbons from two wars against Germany: "maybe family had kept one of old ribbons."⁴³ More serious—like the street seller of flags—is *one soldier and one sailor full-length; head and shoulders of sailor*. Neither satirical nor jingoistic, the drawings are tender depictions of young men in uniform, individuals from the groups he will paint in the September series. Both wear pretty uniforms: the pants and cap of the sailor are sky blue; the soldier wears the dashing red trousers that will prove such an easy target on the battlefield. Charlot sees the soldier and sailor as individuals, not embodiments of the nation; he has even painted the sailor's face separately in larger scale to make it a true portrait. The sunlight behind the men casts their faces in shadow, making them seem dejected before their ominous mission. Charlot seems to reserve his satire for civilians, like people parading with flags looking as frivolous as the students in Freiburg. He enjoyed drawing street scenes with funny captions that recall Daumier and contemporary newspaper or journal cartoons.⁴⁴

Six Small Sheets of Watercolors of Paris in September 1914 are very different in mood.⁴⁵

Charlot has gone out with his small sketchbook into the beautiful light and taken advantage of it in his fully realized impressionist style with its subtle washes melting all the forms into the lovely atmosphere. Taking the war preparations seriously was clearly difficult when the world wore such a festive air. Sailors were mustered on a field in front of a big Ferris wheel, and soldiers in front of the Bastille monument. The luminous atmosphere seemed more real than the historic occasion, and the sailors and requisitioned cars in front of the Eiffel Tower are small to the point of being unrecognizable in the vast field with the tall tower rising against a beautifully washed sky. Charlot was drawn to the base of the tower to paint a

scene that had no military content and was concerned solely with the light; he called it *contre-soleil*, that is, an object depicted against the light. Similarly, scenes of *fortifs*, wooden X-shaped barriers, seem excuses to do almost abstract compositions with light and shadow; one of which is called *coup de soleil*, again putting landscape before subject. Indeed, on the verso of one drawing is the beginning of a riverbank scene with no recognizable military connection. A more involving subject was a procession to Notre Dame cathedral, which impressed Charlot with its solemnity, so different from the jingoistic parades in Freiburg and Paris. Charlot will paint an oil of another procession in Brittany, make a postwar procession the subject of his first mural project in France, and develop the procession at Chalma as a major theme in Mexico.

Charlot continued to draw similar scenes that caught his interest; a surviving example is *Exhibition of Airplanes at the Court of the Invalides* of January 1916, which Charlot described: “Airplanes at Invalides. French or downed German. = show of air battle.”⁴⁶ Charlot had long been interested in airplanes, but here he places them in the towering context of the Invalides, perhaps intrigued by the contrast between old and new. The small drawing is remarkable for its suggestion of bigness and detail.

Most of Charlot’s oils at this time were produced under the direction of his teachers:

All my work with my professors, if you want, of art were in oil, and we still have here a dozen or so landscapes in oil. Then either in the studio I used to copy landscapes by the teachers or in Brittany directly from nature or in Saint Mandé.⁴⁷

Eight small oils on special paper survive, which Charlot dated “Before 1917” and grouped under the subtitle “St. Mandé,” after the “Brittany” group of oils, done in August 1916.⁴⁸ I would date the earliest Saint Mandé oils from the family’s move to that location in June 1915 and the latest over the winter of 1915–1916, when Charlot had already begun working in his liturgical style and was phasing out his more Impressionist work. The two sets of oils cannot be placed in a sequence of stylistic development; rather Charlot seems to be working sometimes more closely to his earlier fine-stroke mode and sometimes with new, bolder strokes. In all cases, Charlot applies the paint with expertise, exploiting mixtures of pigment, glazing, and especially the glutinous quality of the medium. Just as he experimented with different pencil strokes in childhood, so he explores the effects of different strokes in oil. This is true even of *Lake*, which is so conventional in composition that it seems to be one of the copies Charlot mentions: thick strokes sculpt the human figure, follow the growth line of trees, or zigzag abstractly through branches.

The boldest Saint Mandé oils glow with summer lighting and may have been done shortly after the family settled into their new home. *Our House* recalls Charlot’s childhood compositions of the kitchen door at Poissy with its contrast of geometric architecture and variegated foliage, but he is working here with a new boldness of stroke and at a higher level of generalization of form. Flowers, bushes, and trees are brushed in roughly as swashes of color without obvious sculpted forms. The elements of the reddish architecture are done in corresponding strokes—walls in long descending strokes, beams in horizontal—but Charlot’s usual effect is reversed: rather than sculpting the architecture, he is absorbing it into the brushstrokes. This is startlingly clear in the steps leading up to the door: they consist of

horizontal strokes without an outline, which leaves the sides of the staircase undefined. *Our House, Close-up* is even bolder and more generalized. Again the elements of house architecture have been rendered in broad corresponding strokes. A wall at the bottom right is rendered in less representational strokes—vertical at the side and bottom and horizontal across the top and down the middle—as if to communicate the idea rather than the appearance of the wall. Even more surprisingly, the broad horizontal stroking that he developed for architecture has now been extended to the vegetation above the wall and to the right of the house; the sky has also been rendered in flat but textured horizontal strokes. These two paintings are the most innovative of Charlot's surviving Saint Mandé oils in their ratio of gesture to descriptiveness in the brushstrokes. That is, Charlot's brushwork in oils had been apparent but largely focused on a fine description of the form being painted. In these two paintings, the brushstrokes are bolder and the strength of the gesture with which they are made becomes one of the main interests of the paintings. Charlot draws the viewer's attention to the act of painting more than to the subject matter. This is the bravura brushwork that he came to dislike in oil, in part, I believe, because it emphasized the painter over the subject.

Charlot's strokes are bold but more sculptural and descriptive in *Interior. My Studio*. The high mansard roof shows that his studio was on the top floor; a mirror above the mantelpiece reflects a window with white shades. (The architectural *Roofs* may have been done looking out this window over the neighboring suburban structures, recalling Charlot's rooftop series from the apartment at the Chaussée d'Antin; again Charlot was interested in a protruding red form in the center of the scene.) The Louis XVI fauteuil that Odette later kept for her apartment in Paris is recognizable in the studio; it was inherited by David Charlot. The portrait on the wall seems to be the one of Anne as a young girl that was still in the family until stolen from storage. The broad strokes convey the warm glow of the interior, a golden effect that Charlot felt was a characteristic of oil painting. Amid the large forms, the viewer can almost fail to notice that two small touches of light are in fact exquisitely sculpted and illuminated objects: a flagon of red glass on the mantelpiece and a small bottle on the book shelf. Similarly, in *Our House*, three splashes of color prove on closer inspection to be two white sculpted flowers high on the bush to the left and a red flower on the bed below it. In *Our House, Close-Up*, a careful lily-like plant is revealed to the left of center at bottom. Charlot admired such tip-of-the-brush work in Watteau; in these three paintings, he seems to dash off these tiny forms without disturbing the overall rough impression. *Gate of Garden*, which recalls Charlot's garden subjects at Poissy, seems to have been painted in bravura style as well and seems to have included some experimentation in color, but the painting is now in such poor condition that the effects are hard to recognize.

The latest Saint Mandé oils are, I would guess, *Snow Scene* and *Snow Scene, Wall In Foreground*, both carefully sculpted descriptions of an unusual weather phenomenon, an interest of Charlot's seen prominently in his *Twelve Watercolors of Rooftops and Skyscapes* of 1911. The war years were burdened with especially cold winters, particularly those of 1914–1915 and 1917. The latter oil resembles Charlot's street scenes from Poissy with a main wall almost parallel to the picture plane. Thick paint sculpts the ending of the wall, the muddy street, and the snow-covered branches. Paint is used three-dimensionally in *Snow Scene* as well, molding especially the architectural features and the street

slush. The light has the color of slush. Charlot also painted a watercolor at the time, *St. Mandé Roofs under Snow*.⁴⁹ The washes of unexpected color play freely against the light pencil outlines, creating an impression of hushed stillness.

A seminal experience for Charlot's art was his trip to Brittany. If the procession Charlot painted at Notre Dame de la Clarté near Perros-Guirec is the traditional one for that church, it was held in August 1915; this would date Charlot's trip to that month. Brittany had long been a vacation destination and was prized for its rugged scenery and active, artistic folk culture by artists from Boudin and Gauguin and his students, like Jan Verkade, through the Nabis, like Maurice Denis and Paul Sérusier. The Charlot family had earlier vacationed at Royat and in Normandy, where the young Charlot had drawn the scenery, the folk costumes, and the curious boathouses on the coast. Charlot's mother now sent him on vacation to relieve him of some of the emotional and practical troubles he was facing at home:

Well, I'm very vague about it. I didn't have my mother with me. I think we took a vacation, or I took a vacation from our difficulties. My father was sick at the time, and I'd had a hard time with different things, and so I think I was given a few weeks to be in a way by myself. There was a little group of us in an hotel in, I think it was Plougastel. And even though it was a place where tourists went, it couldn't have been very different from the times when Gauguin was there in a little *pension*. It was more a *pension* than an hotel. And I went around just making little oil paintings of things, and I should have somewhere a sketchbook of my drawings. As I said, I was roaming around the folk churches, making studies and sometimes sketching some of the folk sculpture, and so on. The Bretons of the time were still all in their Breton costumes. A lot of black or blue-black velvet, the women with their white coifs. It was a very lovely experience, and it sandwiched in my life between the declaration of the war and a little later on my going to the wars, of course. And I really can't remember why I was there. I just know that I was there. (Interview November 6, 1970)

Unfortunately, Charlot's sketchbook from Brittany has not survived, but he was emphatic about the strong impression made on him by Breton folk art and the influence it had on his liturgical work:

And, of course, I had gone to Brittany, and in Brittany I was impressed by the...what we would call now the *Santos* in relation to New Mexico, the devotional stone carvings and wood carvings that you find in the little Brittany churches, which correspond again to the Images d'Epinal, but this time in three dimensions. Incidentally, it's the same type of thing that started Gauguin in his search for the primitive or more exactly in making coincide his remembrance of Peruvian primitiveness of his ancestors—he had Peruvian blood, Inca blood—and things he could find closer to Paris. Some of the Gauguin Brittany pictures incorporate totally, without really much change, much modification, with a great humility, some of the elements of the Breton folk sculptors. There is one, for example, of a stone Calvary with some Breton women kneeling or sitting by the stone Calvary, which is a copy of

a stone Calvary. And it goes much further in the early Gauguins towards the primitive masks and so on that he was to paint later in Tahiti than anything he had done up to then. There is, of course, the famous *Yellow Christ*, which is a transposition with minimum changes of one of those crucifixes in one of the country churches of Brittany. I had, myself, a similar contact, and I would say similar reaction, and it is a parallel with Gauguin. I had known before the pre-Hispanic primitive forms, and I recognize in the stone sculpture, wood sculptures of the wood and stone carvers of Brittany, something similar and a marvelous, humble religiosity, I would say, without pride.

One of the most impressive stone Calvaries—one hundred and eighty figures on an elevated platform—is found at Plougastel.

Breton folk art would be a major influence on the liturgical style Charlot was soon to develop. But characteristically, the influence needed time to mature. The surviving artworks from Charlot's trip to Brittany are a set of five oil paintings on special paper and a pencil and wash on paper;⁵⁰ all six works can be placed in the line of his contemporary development. Most seem to have been done "directly from nature" (Interview October 18, 1970), although the complicated, people-filled *Notre Dame de la Clarté. Procession* was most likely painted later from sketches done on the spot; and Charlot told me that *Sunny Sous-Bois* had been done in the same way.

The two oils and watercolor of the massive red, fifteenth- or sixteenth-century church Notre Dame de la Clarté in a hamlet near Perros-Guirec testify to Charlot's attraction to the local art. *Notre Dame de la Clarté, Cemetery Foreground* is the most detailed, usually a sign of Charlot's first exploration of a subject. The scale, careful brushwork, and the placement of the vegetation in front of the architecture connect the oil to his earlier work. The pencil and wash *Notre Dame de la Clarté, Brittany* is less reportorial; the great pink bulk of the church rears itself up from the cemetery and the much smaller buildings in the background. Charlot has outlined the subject in pencil, but the washes are free and unusually flat, creating broad, simple areas of color on the church and sky. In contrast, numerous white reserves simultaneously suggest and suppress a multitude of details in the cemetery section.

Notre Dame de la Clarté, Procession is a careful composition and one of Charlot's most interesting early oils. It records an experience that was important for his development as a liturgical artist:

At Breton pilgrimages, such as that of Notre-Dame de la Clarté—as the pious folks in blue blouses, the girls in white coiffes, streamed candle in hand by a road calvary—this active relationship between a functional art and the live folk who enjoyed it raised a question that even the Louvre had failed to raise.⁵¹

Again, he has treated the church as a great undetailed mass, using bold strokes for its simplified bulk as well as for the architecture in the street. The problem he faced was depicting the procession in an equally monumental way. He could not simply suggest details, as he had in the cemetery section of the watercolor

because the procession itself was important for the subject of the painting. His solution was to include enough detail to make the procession recognizable—people in traditional costume holding banners—but to treat the procession itself as a mass receding towards the church. A few figures standing outside the procession suggest the individuals who fill it. Charlot had earlier used the same device in his small watercolor of a procession at Notre Dame in Paris. In both paintings, a pair of people act as a repoussoir and heighten the sense of the mass of the procession; in both, a third person looks down at the procession from a small height. The use of the same compositional devices shows that the Brittany procession scene was a considered composition rather than an on-site painting. Charlot was clearly interested in processions as a subject and compositional problem, and as I stated earlier, they would become an important theme in Mexico.

Sunny Sous-Bois is the product of the same process:

the other one [a painting of the Villa St. Louis] was a direct rendering. It was a nice thing to remember what that house was like, but I was beginning to make a difference, shall we say, between representing a corner of nature, even if the corner was full of memories, and making a picture. This is already organized certainly. You can feel that it is nature filtered in a kind of a composition which I would say is French, in the sense that there is something rational about it, underlying the pretty colors. (“An Artist Looks Back,” March 8, 1972)

Charlot would have done several sketches with color notations and used them for the final composition completed in his studio. The painting has the freshness of *plein-air* work, but the composition is more elaborate and studied. The truncated trees are used as verticals, a device found also in Maurice Denis, and used first by Charlot in his *Sketchbook 1910*, (16) tree trunks. *Sunny Sous-Bois* is equally a study in color: the vantage point is a darkened area under a natural canopy looking out toward a sunny field. The fact that the background is lighter than the foreground tends to flatten the image onto the picture plane, an effect that Charlot would explore throughout his life. The paint is laid on very carefully with attention to the relationship between stroke and object. That relationship is less sculptural than earlier; sculpting in the oil paint is found only in some of the trunks. Rather the strokes correspond to the direction of the form—horizontal strokes for the earth—and the movement of the objects—vertical strokes for the bunches of leaves on the trees. The colors seem pure, but are in fact the result of mixing and glazing. Nonetheless, areas covered in strokes of more or less pure colors are as close to Cézanne as Charlot ever came. Five vermilion flecks provide an unexpected amount of sparkle. In *Sunny Sous-Bois*, Charlot has transferred many of the qualities of his watercolor landscapes to the new medium, while taking advantage of its own possibilities.

Red Rocks And Sea, 1 and *Red Rocks And Sea, 2* seem however to have been done “directly from nature,” as Charlot stated; the rose granite formations near Perros-Guirec are famous local sights. (Maurice Denis appears to have painted one of these in his *Péninsule de Perros*, 1898.) The two oils have the same bold brushstrokes found in the most innovative Saint Mandé oils. Sky and sea are depicted in long horizontal strokes, strongly textured with the brush; their finely graduated transition of tone provides

an effective depth. Similarly bold strokes paint the sweep of the coast scooping into the land and jutting out into the sea. On those peninsular points, monumental, red rock formations bulge up three-dimensionally into the space created by land, water, and sky. Charlot is fascinated by the red bulk of the rocks, so similar to Notre Dame de la Clarté, and his brushstrokes sculpt their forms as massive architecture. The power of the form inspires the brush to a new strength. Throughout his life, painting with oil would draw from Charlot unplanned effects. Charlot would continue favoring red or reddish subjects in his next oils.

While in Brittany, Charlot entered into other aspects of the local culture. For instance, he transcribed in shorthand from a folk singer a song of fifteen eight-line stanzas. I remember him singing the song to an interested visitor to our home in Hawai'i in the late 1960s or early 1970s: he liked particularly a point in the description of a beautiful woman: “Les sourcils d’argenté !” ‘Her silvered eyebrows!’⁵²

Charlot’s oils of this period, just like his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist watercolors, represent a stylistic direction he did not follow; he moved instead toward the very different liturgical style of his Gilde period. The reasons for Charlot’s decision were many—I will discuss them below—but important among them were his feelings about the medium itself:

So I could handle oil very well, in a way, but it wasn’t, I wasn’t at ease with what I said: the bravura passages, the possibilities of fooling the people with romantic brushstrokes, and the impastos were not something that I wanted to put in my art. And gouache is much closer to the old-fashioned egg tempera painting, for example, that the miniaturists used in the illuminations of prayer books and so on. I had a good knowledge of the Middle Ages, of the art of the Middle Ages. And 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)

Throughout the period of this chapter, Charlot’s life seems crowded with a variety of tasks and activities. On the verso of his portrait of Louis Goupil, *Bon Papa* of November 1914, he is calculating the price of eggs. On the verso of *One sheet: two portraits of Louis Goupil sleeping* of January 1914, he has a to-do list:

sténo
au matin, prévenir Marquet que pas dîner
10b M^r Thirault vers 10h.
: Pierre
gymnastique 2h
[Jour de l’An—Déjeuner]
M^r Thirault
M^r Delaistre

‘shorthand
morning, tell Marquet no dinner
10b Mr. Thirault towards ten o’clock
Pierre
gymnastics two o’clock
[Birthday—Lunch]
Mr. Thirault
Mr. Delaistre’

No longer eligible to use the school facilities, Charlot needed another gymnasium to do his exercises and an entrance card dated February 1915 was issued to him by the Comité d’Education Physique.

Charlot was also continuing his book and print collecting:

Well, on weekends I had my time; I would go by the Seine. I told you that the Beaux-Arts school was Rue Bonaparte, the Louvre was on the other side of the Seine, and so I would just go along the quays and look in the secondhand cases that were full of books. I even made a little money on it. I knew some of the old gentlemen there, the old booksellers, and some of them had a little business, which wasn’t a swindle but helped them sell their engravings. They had a bunch of black and white engravings of things, fashions and what-not, and they would sell them better if they were in color, so I made a little money by putting color on those old engravings. They looked much prettier, and they sold much better. And from time to time, I found something I myself wanted and bought or exchanged for something of that type or some task that I made for them.⁵³

He was adding to his collection of Léon Bloy and beginning to collect illustrated editions of Balzac:

the works of Balzac and in early editions were rather easily available at the time, around 19—, let’s say, 12 to 15, something like that. And I got some very fine editions of his series of *Physiologies*, *Physiologie du Mariage*, etc., with very lovely lithographs. They were small format things with lithographs by people like Gavarni, for example, that I treasured very much.

Charlot also collected process prints⁵⁴ and illustrated journals like *Le Crapouillot*, to which he later submitted materials to publicize Mexican art.⁵⁵ In fact, he gave the title *Charlot Crapouillot* to a postwar caricature, possibly indicating that it resembled the illustrations in that humor journal (a *crapouillot* is a trench mortar—one appears in the picture—or the person who employs it, so Charlot could have been using the word literally).

Charlot amassed a large collection of prints by Honoré Daumier in the stalls along the quais and at the Marché aux Puces, and added to it occasionally over the years.⁵⁶ Charlot considered Daumier a great artist, not just a minor one, and offered his wondrous productivity as one piece of evidence for his evaluation. Daumier was also one of Charlot’s favorite artists; he felt their common experience of living

in Paris gave him a special closeness to the earlier artist. Charlot looked at Daumier's prints regularly and usually had one or two Daumiers hanging on his studio walls.⁵⁷ Charlot also studied Daumier; when he purchased the 1969 reprint of Delteil's famous catalogue of the printmaker, he went through his collection, identifying the prints and penciling in the margins their dates and Delteil numbers.⁵⁸ Daumier was a favorite topic of discussion for Charlot and Peter Morse, himself a great cataloguer and admirer of Daumier. Charlot and Morse could discuss printmaking and cataloguing with a professionalism beyond their other friends. One of Charlot's last articles, published posthumously, was in a centennial volume on Daumier to which Morse also contributed.⁵⁹

Charlot loved Daumier's humor, which was close to his own. For instance, in a print from the series *Croquis d'Été*, a man at a swimming pool looks at the miserable bodies of his companions and says, "Je voudrais bien savoir quel est le farceur qui a dit le premier que l'homme était le roi de la création" 'I'd really like to know who the joker was who first said that man is the king of creation.' Similarly, on a beach in Hawai'i, Charlot surveyed the white and sun-blushed bodies of the mainland tourists and said, "It's hard to believe it's the master race."⁶⁰ In *Croquis d'Été: Monsieur le Baron....., j'ai l'honneur de vous présenter monsieur Cascaret, un de nos plus gros actionnaires !..*, the distinguished businessmen follow social form and gesture, even though incongruously semi-dressed in sagging bathing trunks. Charlot loved the oddity that destroys social order, like the wind that disrupts the marriage in René Clair's *I Married a Witch*, copied by Jean Renoir in *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*. Charlot himself looked forward to a heaven in which "l'uniforme des bienheureux sera la peau" 'the uniform of the blessed will be the skin' (*Je crois qu'il vaudrait mieux suivre la route droite*, February 7–8, 1924).

As in telling jokes, style is essential in humorous art ("Daumier" 1980: 88 ff.), and Daumier is a genius of visual narration, communicating complicated scenarios in a single image. Most important, the artistic means he uses are the highest and most rigorous. For instance, Charlot greatly admired Daumier's geometric compositions, which distinguish his work from that of his famous contemporary Gavarni. While writing his article on Daumier's compositions, Charlot remarked that he had not found a single illustration by Gavarni that could be analyzed geometrically (Tabletalk October 24, 1977). Moreover, Daumier, just like Charlot, uses geometry for narration.⁶¹ Daumier has also a wonderful sense of form and bulk, as in his many contrasts of fat and skinny (similar to Charlot's own childhood book cover for *Don Quixote*). Charlot particularly appreciated the early portraits Daumier drew from clay models he had made of the subjects, caricatures with an extraordinary sculptural quality; the same can be found in works by Charlot, such as the *Adam* from his *Fourteen Panels Symbolizing the Fine Arts* of 1955.⁶² Daumier regularly used form for humor, as seen spectacularly in his gradual transformation of King Louis-Philippe's face into a pear, a print that my father showed to us with great delight when we were children.

Charlot had also long been interested in combinations of images and words, which Daumier can use to perfection. In his article, Charlot emphasizes the negative aspects of the relation between the two in Daumier's work (1980: 59), but in conversation, he could be positive. Indeed, in a number of the images, for instance, of bathers, the jokes seem to be essentially Daumier's. The French of Daumier's prints, ranging from street slang to mock grandiloquence, can be literature in its own right and, I believe,

prepared Charlot to appreciate earlier than most people the literary qualities of the ballads that accompanied the sheets of José Guadalupe Posada in Mexico.

Finally, Charlot entered into Daumier's joy in creation. Once showing his collection to the Hawai'i labor leader Dave Thompson, he was surprised by Thompson's remark, "He doesn't have much economy of line." Charlot looked at Thompson a while and then answered, "He enjoyed drawing."

Certain echoes of Daumier can perhaps be found in Charlot's work. The relation of mother and child in Daumier's *Les Baigneuses : En famille* of September 30, 1847, resembles in profile Charlot's subject *First Steps*. But Daumier was more a kindred spirit and a general inspiration. He proved that popular art could be great art, that the highest artistic means could be effective in the street. He also demonstrated that a great artist can work without compromise in the popular media and in popular genres and that he can make a contribution to society through political cartoons and commentary on social foibles. Charlot's satiric street scenes done early in the war do not resemble Daumier stylistically, but they draw on his spirit; this is true also for Charlot's later cartoons.

Charlot also continued his collection of the Images d'Epinal, which he had started as a young child and which continued to be an inspiration throughout his life:

before I was a soldier actually, there was another thing that was of course an important thing for me: I became a collector of Images d'Epinal. I used to go to the Foire aux Puces, which was near the Place de la Bastille. You could see the column of the Bastille from the Foire aux Puces, and there were a lot of people in the open air, just selling their secondhand wares. There were a lot of second-hand books besides, of course, mechanical parts and all kinds of things. And I found there an album of perhaps fifty sheets of Images d'Epinal and those of the older style, probably mid-nineteenth century—well, they were mid-nineteenth century, I would say; some may have been a little before—that had been put together, not bound, but tied up together by a collector who was certainly aware of the interest of those things; but it must have been done long before. I bought them for a small sum, and they were on very thin paper, and they were already in not very good state. And to preserve them—I don't know if it was a good or bad idea, but it was one way of preserving them—I put white paste on stronger sheets of paper and tried to glue those very thin sheets, the very aged sheets, on the stronger paper with the white paste. And I managed. They wrinkled a little bit, but nevertheless those are still with me now. I am sure they would have been destroyed if I hadn't done that. And they may be valuable. I haven't been able to put a, let's say, money value on the collection, but it has been a big inspiration for me. I look at them even now from time to time to sort of restore my confidence in a certain folk way of line and color. Many of them are by GeorGIN, who is considered the great master of the Images d'Epinal. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Charlot's collection of Images d'Epinal, which was donated to the Jean Charlot Collection, contains thirty-four prints from the classic series on the Napoleonic wars, a number done by Georquin. Most but not all of these have been backed, as Charlot described. The other prints are more modern, including two sentimental mid-nineteenth-century subjects. Several modern "Devinettes," picture puzzles with images hidden in the lines of the pictures, might have been among those given to the young Charlot by his grandfather, the beginning of his collection. A large number of patriotic images were published at the beginning of the war, and several can be found in Charlot's collection: *Un Grand Peuple*, *Nos Alliés les Russes*, and *Le Dieu Thor la plus barbare d'entre les barbares divinités de la Vieille Germanie* (with curiously Aztec-looking skulls and eagle heads!). In this category can be placed five early prints from the series *La Grande Guerre*, which project the heroic imagery of earlier wars inappropriately onto the modern one: cavalry charges, capturing the German flag, and so on. Charlot remembered that at the beginning of the war, French officers had insisted on going into battle wearing white gloves. Charlot was also collecting patriotic posters through the war (Tabletalk early 1970s) and mentioned to me the famous one of the little Belgian girl raising her arms from which the hands had been severed by German soldiers. Widely appreciated and influential were the Epinal series of portraits, such as the *Galérie des Hommes Célèbres de la Grande Guerre*: a heroic figure in vertical format was identified by subsidiary images much like Medieval representations of saints with their individual iconography. Charlot's collection contains two of these: *S. M. Albert 1^{er}* is posed by barbed wire, and the large figure of *Général Gallieni: Le Sauveur de Paris* is explained by small figures in the background landscape.

These popular patriotic images had some influence on Charlot's work, most obviously on the format and design of his print *Saint Barbara* of 1918. I believe he drew on them more distantly for his *Massacre in the Main Temple* (John Charlot 1999, 2001); for instance, *Un Grand Peuple* contains a vignette of a German bayonetting a young blond woman dressed in blue, whose dead baby lies beside her. This use of the Images d'Epinal represents one of the few times that Charlot's work coincided with general art trends. At the beginning of the war, there was a surge of interest in the Images among avant-garde artists, and Raoul Dufy, among others, based a number of works on them.⁶³ Both those artists and Charlot considered the Images a primordial expression of the French tradition.⁶⁴ In fact, two previous generations had found a similar inspiration in the Images; Maurice Denis had written that Gauguin had tried to discover "une tradition sous l'archaïsme grossier des calvaires bretons et des idoles maories, ou bien dans le coloriage indiscret des images d'Epinal" 'a tradition under the gross archaism of Breton Calvaries and Maori idols, or else in the indiscreet coloring of the Images d'Epinal' and that since 1890 artists seeking for French sources had found the Images, "cet art éminemment français et traditionnel" 'this art eminently French and traditional.'⁶⁵ What distinguishes Charlot's work from others at the beginning of the war is the seriousness and respect with which he treats that folk tradition, so different from the playful patronizing of Dufy. The difference in approach can be appreciated by comparing Charlot's *Saint Barbara* to Picasso's 1914 sketch for his friend *Guillaume Apollinaire, Artilleryman* (Silver 1989: 39). The relation of the vertical figure to the diagonal cannon and the use of the inscription are startlingly but accidentally similar in each image—the earlier Picasso image was not circulated publicly—but the spirit of each is radically different. Picasso's is all macho flash and parody. Charlot's

returns the format to its medieval roots in sacred images to create a refuge, a comfort, and a hope for the men actually serving the guns. Charlot studied the Images d'Epinal and visited the firm while he was stationed at nearby Sézanne during the war; this was probably the occasion on which he collected an untrimmed image of a girl with two dogs, showing the blank margin around the tone plate and the registry lines.

Charlot's experience of collecting prints in the streets of Paris prepared him for Mexico:

So there has been there a long series of contacts since I was a small boy with popular engravings. And of course being aware of that business of popular sheets, images, pilgrim images we could say—when I was in Mexico, very quickly I looked for the similar thing, and that is the way, of course, I got very much interested in the publishing house of Vanegas Arroyo, who are the people who had printed the work of José Guadalupe Posada. And it is really not through an accident but through that pre-form so to speak by which I was acutely aware of folk engraving that I was, we could say discovering, rediscovering, anyhow publicizing, the work and the name of José Guadalupe Posada. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Charlot gathered a personal collection of Posada, his predecessor Manuel Manilla, and other popular artists and, with very little money, made a collection for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Indeed, Charlot's collecting and publicizing probably rescued many of those artists' images from loss. Charlot also proposed unsuccessfully to a number of U.S. institutions that they give him money to pack and ship to them the working drawings, cartoons, and tracings of the early muralists, invaluable works that were simply being discarded and have now been lost to posterity. Charlot's evaluation of Posada was equally important: just like Daumier, Posada was a *great* artist and proved that popular art need not be folk.

Charlot was clearly not an ordinary art collector. He very much enjoyed being able to live with artworks that he particularly admired and would hang them or look at them occasionally to draw inspiration, as he described for the Images d'Epinal. But he was always too poor to collect regularly or, even more, to deal in the art market, which he occasionally regretted. He wanted very much, for instance, to buy a small El Greco crucifix that was offered to him by his friend, the dealer J. B. Neumann, in New York in the 1930s. Most of Charlot's expensive art possessions were given to him or acquired by trading his own works with friends. Charlot's advantages as a collector were that he never equated artistic value with monetary, that his personal taste drew him to artworks that the wealthy ignore—like street art—or dislike. In the 1930s, Charlot so admired *Portrait of a Dead Girl*, 1931, by David Alfaro Siqueiros, that he bought it; in the 1990s, Sotheby's could sell it only at a discount. Finally, Charlot's excellent eye could discover value before others did. For instance, he collected the body ornaments and sculpture of Papua New Guinea long before they became fashionable. His collecting was an expression of his character.

Henri's death in September 1915 after more than a year of illness marked the end of one of the saddest periods in Charlot's life. Charlot then pulled himself together to face the coming years. In

January 1916, he wrote a poem expressing his regained strength, hope, and faith in the pilgrimage of his life:

Tel, prêt au départ, le pèlerin,
J'ai gonflé mon outre et ma besace
et pour les chemins où nul ne passe
élu le cilice et ceint mes reins.

J'ai dit "Je suis fort et jeune, rien
n'osera borner sous moi l'espace."
la glèbe moelleuse, l'herbe grasse
j'ai dit d'abord "Ça n'est pas malin."

J'ai dit "Mon bissac est lourd, Mangeons."
"mon outre est pleine à crever. Buvons."
J'ai dit "L'étape est fort loin. Dormons."

J'ai dit "mes pieds sont crevés, mes joints roides."
J'ai dit "mes genoux saignent. la boue glace."
J'ai dit "Votre Volonté soit faite."

'Just like the pilgrim, ready to leave,
I have filled my water-skin and shoulder-bag,
and for the paths where no one passes
I have chosen the hair shirt and girded up my loins.

I said, "I am strong and young, nothing
will dare to limit the space beneath me."
The moist sod, the thick grass.
I said at first, "That is not smart."

I said, "My beggar's sack is heavy. Let us eat."
"My water-skin is full to bursting. Let us drink."
I said, "The journey-stage is very long. Let us sleep."

I said, "My feet are aching, my joints are stiff."
I said, "My knees are bleeding. The mud is freezing."
I said, "Your Will be done."

Probably a month earlier (if he did not move into a new room or into his studio), he redecorated his somber bedroom, which he had drawn, *Bedroom at St. Mandé*, probably soon after he occupied it in June 1915. He now depicts *His Own Bedroom at St. Mandé*,⁶⁶ which is carefully dated "Décembre 1915" and is done

entirely in bright, free, and easy washes without pencil outlines of any kind. The same stand for large drawings can be recognized, but the Spartan iron or brass bed has been replaced by a couch covered with colorful, probably brocaded pillows. The architectural features of the room—the divisions of the walls and the line where the walls and the ceiling meet—have been painted with a broad red stripe. He has hung on the walls a large, colorful Chinese silk or brocade from ceiling to floor, a number of pictures, a perhaps art nouveau lamp, and a guitar festooned with ribbons. This is the cheerful room into which he invited Louis Goupil to have his smiling portrait done. Charlot also grew his first and only beard and moustache.

More importantly, from late 1915, Charlot had already begun to develop a new purpose for his work and a new style appropriate to that mission: liturgical art.

5.2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW LITURGICAL STYLE

Up to now, Charlot's art had followed a smooth progression of style through the exploration of different visual elements, such as composition, color, and light. Although this was a development that emerged from his own observation and creativity, it retraced the recent history of art from general Classicism, through Impressionism, to Post-Impressionism: that is, from compositional constructions to an exploration of optical sensation and finally to a combination of the two, in which visual perception was employed more freely to achieve an intended effect in the painting. In Cézanne's words, "ce qu'il faut, c'est refaire Poussin sur nature. Tout est là" 'what is necessary is to redo Poussin on the basis of nature. Everything is in that' (Vollard 1919: 103). Classical composition was based on forms, and the neutral light of the atelier emphasized their solidity. Impressionists then explored the neglected optical effects of atmosphere, which tended to dissolve those forms in the ambient light. In Post-Impressionism, traditional compositional concerns were addressed, but rather than using the neutral light of the atelier, the painter accepted the challenge of integrating into his work the atmospheric achievements of Impressionism. Cubism would later move beyond that challenge.

I have already quoted Charlot's statement:

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)

As is clear from an examination of his artworks, Charlot was not copying the artists of the different schools, but exploring personally the possibilities he saw in the works to which he was exposed. In whatever school or style Charlot was working, his strong artistic personality always ensured that his own creations looked different.

Charlot was aware of the articulate discussion of the art-historical movements of his time: after the experience of Impressionism, Cézanne had renewed the classical concern for composition, and his direction was being followed in Charlot's time by the Post-Impressionists, like the Nabis, and by the

Cubists. The artist would no longer attempt merely to record his sensations but to express his total human response, including the organizing activity of his intellect; for some artists, this response included the desire to communicate a message. Maurice Denis' writings were basic to this art-historical view, tracing the reaction against Impressionism from "Cézanne, premier initiateur de toutes les recherches du style" 'Cézanne, the first initiator of all the researches into style,' along with Gauguin and Van Gogh, through Seurat and others, into his own generation.⁶⁷ Despite his antipathy for Cubism, Denis grudgingly intimated that Braque was in the line of this classical development.⁶⁸ After a period when Cubism was considered a disruption of the line of tradition—both by its admirers and its detractors—the above view was increasingly accepted by critics and became the conventional one that can be questioned today. Denis himself did not oversimplify and schematize a complicated development, recognizing for example the compositional work of Impressionists (1912: 60).

Charlot attended the lecture given by Denis to the Gilde Notre-Dame on January 7, 1918, which contained the following passage quoted or closely reported in *La Gilde*:

Mais les symbolistes sont venus à la religion avec leur conception artistique. Ils ont conçu la peinture non comme une représentation pure et simple de la nature, mais comme une notation sur une surface plane, à l'aide de lignes et de couleurs des réalités idéales de l'âme de l'artiste, et des réactions de cette âme au contact des réalités sensibles ou immatérielles.

C'est assez dire qu'ils font de la décoration. Mais si cette décoration peut se permettre certaines licences assimilables aux métaphores qu'on permet aux écrivains, lorsqu'elle passe des murailles d'un Palais à celles d'une Eglise, elle doit s'astreindre à une discipline plus austère, et suivre la norme de vérité qui dans le temple de la Vérité s'impose aux artistes aussi bien qu'aux adorateurs. Donc le trompe-l'œil doit être banni comme une duperie, et comme un mensonge. Et le Maître du Monde, qu'il s'agisse des lignes, des couleurs ou des âmes veut être adoré en esprit et en vérité.⁶⁹

'The Symbolists came to religion with their artistic views. They conceived of painting not as a representation pure and simple of Nature, but as a notation on a level surface, by means of lines and colors, of the ideal realities of the soul of the artist, and of the reactions of that soul to the contact with sensible or immaterial realities.

It is enough to say that they did decoration. But if this decoration can be permitted certain licenses similar to the metaphors permitted writers, when it passes from the walls of a palace to those of a church, it must subject itself to a more austere discipline and follow the norm of truth that, in the temple of Truth, is imposed on artists as much as on devotees. Thus trompe-l'œil must be banished as duperie and lie. The Master of the World wants to be adored—whether by lines, colors, or souls—in spirit and in truth.'

In principle, Denis strove to "intensify colour and simplify form" (Frèches-Thory and Terrasse 1991: 21). During the Occupation, Charlot read Max Raphael's *Von Monet zu Picasso: Grundzüge einer Ästhetik und*

Entwicklung der Modernen Malerei of 1919, and marked a number of significant passages, including a long series of quotations from Emile Bernard and Maurice Denis on Cézanne; including:

d’abord une soumission complète au modèle ; avec soin l’établissement de la mise en place, la recherche des galbes, les relations des proportions ; puis, à très méditatives séances, l’exaltation des sensations colorantes, l’élévation de la forme vers une conception décorative ; de la couleur vers le plus chantant diapason. Ainsi plus l’artiste travaille, plus son ouvrage s’éloigne de l’objectif, plus il se distance de l’opacité du modèle lui servant de point de départ, plus il entre dans la peinture sans autre but qu’elle-même ; plus il abstrait son tableau, plus il simplifie avec ampleur après l’avoir enfanté étroit, conforme, hésitant. (81 f.)

‘first a complete submission to the model; establishing with care the placement, the search for the outlines, the relations of the proportions; then in very meditative sessions, the exaltation of the coloring sensations, the elevation of the form towards a decorative conception; of the color towards a more singing diapason. Thus, the more the artist works, the more his work distances itself from the objective, the more it distances itself from the opacity of the model that serves him as a point of departure, the more he enters into the painting without any other goal than itself; the more he abstracts his picture, the more he simplifies with amplitude after having given birth to it as narrow, conformist, hesitant.’

Other passages marked include:

Die Modellierung konzentriert sich für Cézanne nach den Formen von “sphère, cône et cylindre.” (87)

‘Modeling is concentrated for Cézanne on the forms “sphere, cone, and cylinder.”’
L’exemple de Cézanne nous enseignait à transporter les données de la sensation en éléments d’œuvre d’art. (quoting Maurice Denis, 91).

‘Cézanne’s example taught us to transport the givens of sensation into the elements of a work of art.’

Plus c’est plat, plus c’est de l’art...Faisons des cartes à jouer. (quoting Manet, 109).

‘The flatter it is, the more it’s art...Let’s make playing cards.’

Charlot did not mark but was certainly aware of the famous sayings by Cézanne: “Je vais en développement logique de ce que nous voyons et ressentons par l’étude sur nature” ‘I proceed in logical development from what we see and feel through direct study of nature’ (79); and Cézanne’s famous statement of his goal, “faire de l’impressionnisme quelque chose de solide et de durable comme l’art des Musées” ‘to make of Impressionism something solid and durable like the art in museums’ (91).⁷⁰ Charlot would have already known many of the above quotations from his reading of Denis and others.

Liturgical art was created not simply by choosing religious subjects but by developing an appropriate style; this was clear to all serious artists (e.g., Denis 1922: 140). In most church art of that

time until today, the most sacred subjects have been treated in the worst possible style. French art and literary criticism emphasizes style; for instance, Balzac and Zola are recognized as great artists but their styles are seriously disputed. In Charlot's discussions of art, style is always central. In speaking of religious literature, for instance, Charlot 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).

Charlot used the word *style* in two senses. An individual artist had a personal way of working. More important for this discussion, *style* could be used to denote the level of true art. Prior to subject matter and message, a work had to reach that level to be good. Thus Charlot could appreciate good literature and art with whose message he disagreed—like the writing of Cocteau and Gide, which he recommended to me for their style—and condemn bad work however laudable its content and intent.⁷¹ However, as discussed below, he felt that once the level of true art had been reached, the subject matter could add to the beauty of the total work. A religious subject treated in an appropriate and worthy style could thus attain the highest level of beauty.

Charlot's experience of liturgical art in France forms the background of his view of the modern movement in Mexico. Often mistaken for a mere revival of local subjects, which had in fact been used continually since the Conquest, the new movement, Charlot insisted, consisted in the creation of an appropriate national style. Similarly, he felt that the originality of a Maya artist was denied "because of a confusion between subject-matter and style" (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 343). Thus Charlot considered David Alfaro Siqueiros' first murals of major importance, although they had generally been neglected by scholars: "Siqueiros was the first to erect a naked Indian body as removed from picturesqueness as a Greek naked athlete, a figure of universal meaning within its racial universe" (*MMR* 207).

More than he had previously, Charlot now set out to create a style. The consciousness with which he did this marks a new stage in the maturity of his art; indeed, the creation of appropriate styles will characterize his career as he moves later through new experiences and into different cultures and subjects. Stylistic creation is always an effort; this first one of Charlot's was a "struggle." In the summer of 1962, Charlot observed attentively as his teenaged son Martin painted his *Fiji Family*. Charlot told me he was amazed that Martin seemed to achieve a style so effortlessly, especially in the armband leaves: Martin just went ahead calmly, did his work, and a style emerged. In contrast, when Charlot and his contemporaries were young, they had had to struggle seriously with the problems of style, which were a central preoccupation. In my opinion, Charlot learned a great deal from this first struggle that helped him achieve more easily his stylistic innovations in the postwar period in France, in Mexico, the continental United States, and the Pacific.

Foolishly, I never interviewed my father specifically on his liturgical style, but while we were looking through his sketches of artillerymen that were preparations for his 1918 lithograph *Saint Barbara*, I recorded in "Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work" two remarks that provide the principles of that

development: “Question of motion toward decorativeness” (my summary) and “attempt at simplification” (direct quotation).

The “attempt at simplification” alludes, I believe, to the abandonment of his previous style. In Charlot’s Impressionist or Post-Impressionist works, the surface is complicated with its subtle renderings of light effects and gradations of color. Simplification made possible the creation of firmer and thus stronger images. Significantly, Charlot changed his media at this time to polychromed wood bas-reliefs and cloth, to be embroidered by his mother. Neither of these media exploited his finely developed manual skills with pencil, pen, watercolor, and oil: “ce quelque chose au bout de mes doigts” ‘this something at the ends of my fingers,’ as he puts it in *La pâte est sur la pelle*, a poem of February 1917. This was a distinctive artistic talent that Charlot recognized in such artists as Watteau, who painted “with the tip of the brush.” That is, Charlot was deliberately choosing media that denied him the use of what had been up to now his strong points as an artist, an expertise that was connected to the particular style he was now discarding.

Charlot’s abandonment of his Post-Impressionist style was not as difficult as it had been for the earlier generations; he did not have the same connection to and investment in Impressionism. Nonetheless, he was acutely aware that his decision involved a loss, just as when he later changed the rainbow palette of his liturgical style to the darker colors of his Mexican one. Charlot would maintain a deep admiration of those painters who had moved forward in the exploration of visual sensation. The painter who exemplified this concern was Vermeer, whose *Lace-Maker* the very young Charlot had seen in the Louvre; it was hung in one of the small rooms, so it could be seen in a setting of the proper scale (Tabletalk January 26, 1979 and earlier). Charlot’s remarks on that artist shed light on the reasons for his own decision:

JPC: You never were very influenced by Northern art, were you? Either Flemish primitives or later Dutch masters?

JC: Well, there are, of course, many different forms. I think Vermeer is something that you can hardly escape. There is *The Lacemaker* in the Louvre, which has certainly influenced me as it has influenced nearly all painters that could go to the Louvre and look at it there. Then there was the great show of, well, of Flemish and Dutch art, perhaps Dutch art it was, I think, in the Pavillon de Marsan, the same one where Proust went and was photographed. The last photographs of Proust were coming out of that show. And that was, of course, a great experience. There were all the great Vermeers, the *View of Delft* and *The Girl with the Pearl*, and so on. Those things are experiences. But Vermeer is in a way not typical. That is, Vermeer went very far into the decomposition of the solidity of the outer world while all his contemporaries and friends and even those who came afterwards underlined that solidity of the world, which was something that pleased the people who paid for their pictures because they really could believe in this world as something solid and permanent. Vermeer, on the contrary, escapes and escapes violently into something else by suggesting that the world is most impermanent, that he cannot catch it even

visually. And that did not please the patrons, obviously, because at Vermeer's death, for example, they found that his pictures were dispersed among the butcher and the baker and so on and so forth. He had had to pay with pictures because he didn't have money to buy his bread.

JPC: Is there any particular influence? I know how much you appreciate Vermeer, but I just don't see any way that that comes out in your particular art. You've never really worked, or very seldom worked the atmospheric end of painting.

JC: Yah, that's true. I would say that it's a very different point of view. I mean, I don't want to pretend that I have a universe-wide philosophy of things, but Vermeer annuls the physical world and makes it impermanent, but doesn't give any extra solution. There's no solution for him. That is, there is no place where he suggests permanency, and maybe in my work, I start from what I think permanent, which is not specially the visible, and when I come to the world as is, there is always a sense of coming down to something which is rather brittle and rather funny and rather impermanent, of course, but it doesn't matter because somewhere, somehow, there is permanency. So, they are two very different approaches. Vermeer is open-ended. Vermeer is open-ended in his thinking, and I swoop down from something which is far from being open-ended, which is solid, concrete, and that is a spiritual world.

JPC: You once told me that you thought Vermeer had seen one of those magic lanterns or whatever and that that might be an explanation for the way he paints the bread, for instance, in that famous painting of the woman at the table.

JC: Well, we know that the people of his generation used the *camera negra*, which was really a photographic apparatus that could not fix the image, and we know that those *camera obscura* were imperfect, and they could not focus. They had no way of focusing. So it's like you would take a photograph with a camera where you cannot fix the focus, and much of it will come out unfocused and so on. That is the physical part. I am quite sure that Vermeer not only looked but copied in some way the image he saw in the *camera obscura* and accepted its imperfections, while his friends corrected the imperfections. But he accepted the imperfections because they coincided with something in him, that is, in his own makeup, that accepted that fact that the world was an illusive affair, was an impermanent affair. So all those things tie together. There is no reason to defend one or the other. Both get together very well. (Interview November 12, 1970)

Charlot found an equally ardent admirer of Vermeer in Paul Claudel in the 1930s:

Claudel and myself, we had some good times analyzing the pictures. Specially the Vermeers, I remember, were something where we could look forever and find forever new things to admire. There was something which was symbolical in some way of the New Testament that had just arrived at the museum and had been dismissed by the critic—it was Edward Algin Jewell,⁷² I think, at the time—even though it was a

genuine Vermeer, as being inferior. Or Jewell said so because it was in warm tones instead of the cool tones as Vermeer should have. Well, of course, the criticism didn't faze us, and Claudel was enthusiastic about the meaning of the picture carried through form. He said it was an apotheosis of the sphere, and so in the center, hanging from the ceiling, there is actually a crystal ball that reflects things around. And then he would say that the eyeballs of the woman represent the New Testament's role towards that ball that reflects the world. She has a hand on her breast, which of course is another globe, and she has her foot on a *mappa mundi*, a representation of the earth, and so on. He could go on finding more globes and more spheres in there, and it became of course a poem by Claudel that had a life of its own besides an explanation of the picture. I don't know if he ever wrote that thing. He probably did, but it is not in his little book on Dutch paintings, where I would have expected—Dutch and Flemish painting—where I would have expected to find it. (Interview December 7, 1970)

Indeed, Charlot continued to admire and discuss Vermeer until the end of his life. On January 16, 1979 (Tabletalk), he spoke of Vermeer's early painting, *Diana and her Companions*, ca. 1655–1656: "The dog is amazing, sort of a full light."

Charlot had a more ambivalent attitude toward what he called "sketchiness," another of the strong features of his own earlier style. Again, certain artists exemplified that tendency, notably Klee and Rouault:

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... What I was telling you is that certain of the modern masters seem to me somehow weaker than they used to at the time when they were sort of mysteries to me. All that comes a little later on than that earliest phase of my career when I was, we could say, an art student, but when I contacted modern art—by modern art I don't mean the art of the Nabis, the art of Maurice Denis, and so on that came before—I had a great attachment to masters—a man like Paul Klee, for example. I would stay in really sort of ecstasies, maybe not ecstasies because it was all analytical, at the show of Paul Klee and look at everything and be delighted. And then later on, nowadays, when I look at the Paul Klee, I find it rather a little thin, desiccated, and intellectual. Even though, of course, they are charming things, I cannot put them anymore on the same basis as the great art, let's say, of a man like Titian or even a man like Monet. Certain things also have lessened in the intensity of my response to them, and one of them, strange to say, is Rouault. When I graduated, so to speak,

from Maurice Denis, the natural master in the modern language for a Catholic was Georges Rouault, and I admired, I still admire, Rouault, but not with the same intensity, perhaps for the same reason. 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...Perhaps that question of a sketch, which had been for me a positive quality in Rouault—that is, his refusal to do the academic work, spade work, that is needed in the complete work of art—that was a positive thing for me, when I was young—maybe I was in a hurry at the time to get there—now becomes a negative. From time to time, I wish he had remained the good, plodding a little bit, academician he was when he was very young. The things of Rouault I like best now perhaps are those he did under the influence, of all things, of Leonardo da Vinci and of Raphael, his very early things. And there is no doubt a tremendous gift as an artist in Rouault, and sometimes I wonder what he would have done if he had been born, for example, in the sixteenth century. I think he would have gone further, he would have been less satisfied with his things that are in a way sketches towards monumental things, but it just happened he never got there. So that is one of my changes of attitudes towards people.⁷³

Rouault was hostile to muralism, stating “Arrêtez, laissez les beaux murs nus” ‘Stop! Leave those beautiful walls naked’ (Régamey 1948: 60).

Charlot had periods when he appreciated Klee; he found him a pleasant relief when he came to New York City after his years of working on monumental art in Mexico. But his final opinions of Klee and Rouault are expressed in the above quotation and not without a certain regret. On March 7, 1972 (Tabletalk), my father told me: “Rouault is beginning to fade for me now. It's funny. I mean, I never thought he would.” On the other hand, Charlot continued to be intrigued by sketchiness. When my father and I visited a Picasso exhibition at a commercial gallery in New York City in 1954, he turned to me from a large painting of a seated woman in which Picasso had not brushed the background to the edge of the canvas and said in a wondering tone: “You see, he doesn't even bother to finish it.”

Charlot had a similarly ambivalent attitude toward Matisse, but ended by admiring him greatly:

Other people have grown perhaps further than they were when I was young. One man is Matisse. I think that the works of Matisse, now that he's dead and his work is finished, comes with extraordinary clarity as nearly the one work by a painter of his generation that was not influenced by other ideas than ideas that are inherent to the making of paintings. And by Matisse I mean the early Matisse, so-called *Fauve*, and the very late Matisse, the Matisse of the cutout papers and so on. In between, of course, he remains a good painter, but he was terribly affected by, well, we could say wealth, that is, the fact that he could live at ease and that he had a taste for old pieces

of furniture and Venetian glass and all those strange pieces of stuff with design on them, Moroccan and whatnot, and he could afford the most expensive models to pose for him, either dressed up like clothes horses or naked. Those things make a long line of decades in the life of Matisse, make of him an inferior artist as far as I am concerned. I don't know why. I think he really was interested in money. He was; it was suggested to him by dealers that a certain kind of picture with rich furniture and naked women would sell very well in the United States. I don't know if there was a conscious thing or unconscious thing, but he certainly was influenced by the so-called "art market." So that whole period, maybe thirty years of his life, for me is annulled by that introduction of things that are not purely painting. But the young Matisse and the old Matisse are supreme, supreme as artists. (Interview September 19, 1970)

Charlot had rejected the connection of art to money since his earliest years. He remembered an incident during his visit to England in 1912 or 1913:

That was one of the things I remember. And then another sort of introduction to the theater: there was a clown, he was alone, and he could play the clown, but before playing the clown, he passed his hat around and got a little money so that he was sure people wouldn't leave before the end of the act. And I remember one day he was unemployed, just sitting there on a bench, and five or six of us went to him, and we begged him to do his act. We thought it was a very funny man and were horrified when he refused. We didn't have any money. We couldn't give him enough money to do his act, and so I had a very strong feeling that the man was being a clown for money. I had never put the two together somehow, and it hurt me to know the world was wicked about money, so desirous of money that he couldn't follow his artistic vocation unless he had money in his pocket. It was quite a disillusion that came on me. (Interview October 22, 1970)

Charlot's instinctual dislike of mercenary artists and art for the rich influenced his thinking. In his "Notes sur des Artistes Grecs" of 1921 or 1922, he quoted:

Apelles aimait à railler. Un de ses élèves lui montra un jour une Hélène qu'il avait chargée d'or : "Jeune homme, lui dit-il, ne pouvant la faire belle, tu l'as faite riche."
Apelles n'employait que 4 couleurs : blanc. ocre. terre rouge. noir.

'Apelles loved to mock. One of his students showed him one day a *Helen* that he had covered with gold: "Young man," he told him, "incapable of making her beautiful, you have made her rich."

Apelles used only four colors: white, ochre, red earth, and black.'

Similarly, in his slide lecture on *Pictures and Picture-Making* of April 12, 1938, he contrasted two paintings by Cézanne:

[Paul Cézanne: *Still Life, Fruits*, Louvre, Paris, ca. 1894] This was the first Post-Impressionist picture to get into the Louvre, which is poetic justice because it is one of the few parvenu pictures Cézanne painted. There is such a wealth of oranges and potteries and tapestries that the painting would fit well into a gaudy interior. It was bought, in fact, by a man of that type, who enjoyed it in his home and left it later to the Louvre.

[Paul Cézanne: *Nature Morte*, Kunsthalle, Basel, 1879–1882] This is a Cézanne *Pauvre* — that is, Cézanne as we like him. This picture, I think, is not yet in the Louvre.

Charlot’s “attempt at simplification” involved hard choices, and he was intensely aware of their consequences. In fact he was abandoning an achieved, expressive, and beautiful style. The positive direction is indicated in the “motion toward decorativeness.” Charlot would in fact identify himself as “M. Charlot, décorateur” at the Gilde (membership list, *La Gilde*, Number 6, March 25, 1918). Charlot’s statement and self-designation must be understood from the contemporary uses of the words *decorativeness*, *decoration*, and *decorator*. On the one hand, it referred to the change from Impressionist recording of sensations to the more active visual construction of Post-Impressionism, as used by Denis in the above quotation: “C’est assez dire qu’ils font de la décoration” ‘It is enough to say that they did decoration.’⁷⁴ The words were also used to designate the extension of artistic activity from easel painting toward other forms of art.⁷⁵ These included what are commonly called today the decorative or minor arts —such as ceramics, glassware, tapestry, and cloth—but also included architectural decoration, such as mural painting and sculpture. *Décoration* also connoted a more permanent connection with a site than enjoyed by easel painting. Pierre du Colombier (January 10, 1921: 96) thus defines “art sacré” ‘sacred art’ as “décoration des édifices du culte, embellissement de tous les objets et accessoires liturgiques” ‘decoration of cult buildings, embellishment of all the liturgical objects and accessories’ and sees the contemporary movement of liturgical art as part of “la renaissance générale de la décoration” ‘the general renaissance of decoration.’

Charlot’s preparatory paintings of his projected mural for a parish church are thus called “réduction au 1/10^e d’une décoration d’église” ‘reduction by one to ten of a church decoration.’ In this use, the word could contain a sense of the subordination of the decorative art to the architectural whole, a sense in keeping with the teamwork and individual humility of the liturgical artist as opposed to the egoistic individualism of the modern artist-genius; “ours was a desire to take contemporary art out of the category of studio experiment and to restore it to its full dignity as the servant of theology and, incidentally, of architecture” (*AA* I 285). The liturgical artist was exemplified for Charlot and his contemporaries by the builders and artists of the cathedrals, whom they idealized into the unhistorical image of the anonymous craftsman. As Charlot stated in his lecture “Nous les Jeunes !” of 1916: “pour nous ‘artisan’ est le mot qui découle plus directement d’art. Nous repoussons presque le titre d’artiste” ‘for us *artisan* is the word that derives more directly from art. We almost spurn the title of artist.’ However, the words *decoration* and *decorator* had even at that time a possible negative connotation, and Charlot later rejected them for himself, forgetting that he had in fact once used them:

When he [Denis] calls himself a decorator I think perhaps it is a true appreciation of his art. As a decorator he was supreme. Maybe because my own experiences at the time were very strong and mixed up with the war and death and so on, I had to change my attitude towards art, and even though I was a muralist, even before painting murals, I never could think of myself as a decorator.⁷⁶

Significantly, Charlot connects this different image of himself to the period after the experience of the war. At the beginning of his liturgical period, however, *Charlot, décorateur* was an expression of the new purpose he had chosen for his art: liturgical art is used to communicate a message, in general, God's plan of creation and providential direction of individual events. Essentially, liturgical art must be able to show how all things fit together in God's sight; the appropriate visual style had, therefore, to be united and constructive. On the evidence of the artworks themselves, Charlot's constructive style was achieved by a renewed emphasis on line and geometric composition with local color in a supporting role. In my interpretation, Charlot's previous style had achieved a personal balance between line and color; he now reemphasized line following an earlier direction now reinforced by his study at the Beaux-Arts, his copying of Aztec codices, and the new influence of Breton folk art. He wrote of line in his *Traité de Peinture* of 1920: "Sa dignité technique est donc de déterminer les autres éléments plastiques comme le squelette détermine la chair" 'Its technical dignity is thus to determine the other plastic elements as the skeleton determines the flesh.'

Charlot's stylistic decision had many reasons. A linear geometric style was more suitable for narrative art and for mural decoration as Charlot understood them. In fact, that style and those types of art are present in Charlot's art from his childhood. As to his liturgical period, Charlot remembered that he had assumed monumental art and murals as his goals from the beginning. I asked Charlot about the general problem in the interview of September 14, 1970:

JPC: Actually, that interests me very much because the early ones, the early paintings we have of yours are very Impressionist, much more than, say, classicist or academic in the good sense of the word—would, say, come from a classical tradition. But by the time you were doing those illustrations for Tante Odette, you have, I think, a black pencil arc, ink line, really, which is then filled in with color, colors which set some of the volume. And this seems to be a tendency in your art towards a more linear, a line painting—or wouldn't you say so? There seemed to be a strong pull in that direction for you, towards further linear...

JC: Well, that has the same thing...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.

Moreover, as seen in the above quotations, for Charlot, a purely optical approach—as in Vermeer or Impressionism—could record a sight—and even communicate a purely pictorial message—but could not express this all-encompassing view. On the evidence of his work, Charlot was not satisfied with the pictorial unity that he himself was able to achieve by correspondences of color and overall lighting. (However, he does propose this as a solution in his lecture “Nous les Jeunes !” of November 1916, discussed below; this point can be used as an objection to my general interpretation.) Charlot saw the same defect, the same incapacity, in children’s art and Cubism:

Si nous regardons les défauts, ils sont : *le défaut de dignité dans la conception*. Nous avons vu que l’enfant possède au plus haut degré (la partageant avec le sauvage) la sensualité plastique qui permet un prompt choix et une représentation avisée des objets, mais il lui manque la sensibilité sexuelle, ou la sociale, ou la religieuse, qui seules peuvent l’amener à coordonner ces objets entre eux avec une finalité définie. En cela son art suit logiquement sa conception du monde qui envisage plus spécialement les objets isolés que dans leurs communes relations. Et c’est là un défaut grave, car la représentation des objets n’est qu’un moyen de l’art. Le cubisme lui-même, qui a été intensément descriptif (directement pour les matières et par allusion pour leur arrangement.), s’est tenu, lui aussi, trop à la surface, à cette écorce de l’art. La description des objets, si belle soit elle, doit n’être qu’un porte-voix de l’idée, et c’est en définitive, cette beauté de l’idée, si les moyens employés la communiquent au spectateur, qui mesure la beauté de l’œuvre. (“Prologue ou Présentation d’un Groupe de Graveurs sur Bois”)

‘If we look at the faults, they are: *the lack of dignity in the conception*. We have seen that the child possesses to the highest degree (sharing that with the primitive) the plastic sensuality that permits a prompt choice and a shrewd representation of objects. But the child lacks the sexual sensibility, or social, or religious, that alone can lead him to coordinate these objects among themselves with a definitive finality. In that his art follows logically his conception of the world, which most especially sees objects isolated more than in their mutual relationships. And that is a serious defect, for the representation of objects is merely a means of art. Cubism itself, which was intensely descriptive (directly for material objects and by allusion for their arrangement), limited itself also too much to the surface, to this husk of art. The description of objects, no matter how beautiful it is, should be only the loudspeaker of the idea, and it’s ultimately that beauty of the idea, if the means employed communicate it to the viewer, that is the measure of the beauty of a work.’

Charlot emphasizes in his writings of the time the need to use artistic means to communicate an idea, which itself adds to the beauty of the work.

I emphasize that the above description is of one period of Charlot’s art. He would return to a greater emphasis on color after studying Grünewald’s Isenheimer altar early during the Occupation: “So I

learned something there that remained with me all my life, I think, and whatever color I choose to use, the color will always modify the line and the composition” (Interview November 12, 1970). Around the same time, Charlot marked in his copy of Raphael’s *Von Monet zu Picasso* Bernard’s remark on Cézanne (86):

Le dessin et la couleur ne sont point distincts ; au fur et à mesure que l’on peint on dessine ; plus la couleur s’harmonise, plus le dessin se précise. Quand la couleur est à sa richesse, la forme est à sa plénitude.

‘Drawing and color are not at all distinct; as one progresses in the painting, one draws; the more the coloring is harmonious, the more the drawing is precise. When the color has reached its proper richness, the form has reached its fullness.’

Charlot knew also Denis’ discussion of the subject, which I describe below. In the 1970s, the artist Richard Frooman would say of Charlot’s oils: “He draws with paint.”

Finally, Charlot’s liturgical purpose offered the actors of Sacred History as the main subjects of a work. This resulted in the human body becoming the main expressive means of the picture. This emphasis on the human form corresponded to the central position human beings occupied in Charlot’s thinking about the war and later about the events of Mexican history:

I went through so many things where it was all people, where people were involved. The first World War, of course—nature was annihilated. Those trenches and those landscapes were absolutely barren, and the question of life and death came into the fore. And in Mexico the social upheavals were so tremendous, and I was mixed up in those...atmosphere at least, or sometimes the actual acts of revolution, so that I couldn’t very well enjoy nature then. So it is, and I think you need a certain amount of relaxation to try and see things from nature’s point of view rather than from man’s point of view. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Only much later in Hawai’i would Charlot return to the observation of the world as a central concern of his art. Significantly, in Hawaiian culture, that observation is the basis of religion, so Charlot was in fact creating the liturgical art of the culture in which he was living. That experience enabled him to give a very different description of his art. As seen above, Charlot contrasted himself to Vermeer by saying he worked from above at the level of divine truth downwards towards earthly sights and events; this is a good description of what he was doing with his liturgical art in France. In Hawai’i, he contrasted himself in the opposite way to a type of painting that had become purely conventional and no longer observed the world, the true basis of art, freshly, carefully, and accurately:

My own way of remembering God is not reason, science, plenitude or sorrow, but optics. The man who could copy the world as is, would testify to the oecumenic truth...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... The same shape under shifting lights assumes new meanings... A logic more subtle than our own offers spectacles in accord with aesthetic laws... 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. (Summer 1951)

Although Charlot here sees his art working upwards from observation to God, God's role has not changed: he provides the design and the stability, indeed the reality, of the world the artist inhabits and observes:

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. I read something in Delacroix, I'm not terribly fond of his writings, but in his journal he said something that impressed me. He was looking at the dry earth. He was in the countryside—he was in his early twenties at the time—in the countryside, and he was looking at, after the rains, at the mud that had dried and cracked, and he mentions in his journal that the cracks in the mud have the same logic that the sprouting of branches out of a tree trunk and the smaller branches out of the branches and so on, and then it ends with a question if there is some relationship in the creation of the cracks in the mud and the creation of the branches of the tree. 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. (Interview October 7, 1970)

5.3. THE LITURGICAL ART MOVEMENT, THE GILDE NOTRE-DAME, AND CHARLOT'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART

Charlot's decision to create liturgical art brought him into a distinct art movement of his time. He joined an association of young liturgical artists, La Gilde Notre-Dame, and studied intensely a new set

of painters, especially Maurice Denis, the first, and then Marcel Lenoir and Georges Rouault. In doing so, he was following his usual practice: although he knew a wide variety of art, he would focus on certain artists at a given time because of the needs of his own work. For instance, he knew Cubism at this time, but began to focus on it only after the war.

The Roman Catholic liturgical art movement was different from any other at the time because of its peculiar historical situation and goals; for instance, it was fighting on several fronts that were different from those of the avant-garde. The main front was the overwhelming preference of ecclesiastical patrons for bad art, which filled the churches, devotional images, and publications—and still does today. The principal characteristics of that art were that it was thoroughly conventional—exploiting uncreatively earlier achievements in composition and design; it was stylistically *retardataire*—from an extremely academic classicism to a decadent baroque and even to “le faux moderne”; and it was prettily sentimental rather than genuinely emotional. The most blatant examples were the commercial, mass-produced plaster statues and bas-reliefs sold in the quarter around Saint-Sulpice. But many of these faults were shared by the supposedly high art of the nineteenth century, in particular, the murals of reputable nineteenth-century Neoclassical painters that filled the Paris churches. To change the situation required struggle: “I have been fighting since I was 18 years old. It was in this century, but long ago. I fought for good liturgical art” (Lesley and Hollis, August 18, 1961: 12). The imperative for liturgical artists was therefore to produce art of good quality that was truly contemporary and expressive of the deep emotions inspired by Christianity. In Charlot’s thinking, art was sacramental, a physical communication of God’s truth and grace, and it had itself to be true in every way to its message. This attitude was shared by the good liturgical artists of the time and was expressed in the eloquent arguments of Denis.⁷⁷

For the liturgical artists, good quality in art entailed an emphasis on craft and on the perennial principles of design. In order, however, for the resulting art to be of its time, those principles needed to be applied, not mechanically, but creatively. Because of their opposition to bad church art, the young liturgical artists could not resort to the pastiches of Classicism that characterized Paris church murals and that would emerge later in the avant-garde. Moreover, no widely accepted contemporary liturgical style had yet been created, however much Denis’ work was admired. As a result, stylistic search was an inevitable preoccupation as it was for all artists of the time.⁷⁸ This need to create a modern style opened the young artists to avant-garde movements. Denis himself had started as an innovative Post-Impressionist, and in literature, Claudel had been inspired by Rimbaud. The good Catholic visual and literary artists did not lose their connection to the innovative movements of their time. This differentiated them from two groups: the French right wing that opposed modern art from the beginning, and members of the avant-garde and the fashionable art world who turned against Cubism and other forms of innovative art for ideological and political reasons at the beginning of the war. Charlot would never reject an art style for political or racial reasons, as some would reject German art during World War I. As a result of the above factors, Charlot’s stylistic development during this period, although it appears parallel at points to the emerging Classicism of the avant-garde, must be recognized as different in its sources and goals.

The place of emotion in art was another inevitable concern because liturgical art normally appealed to the emotions of the viewers; a purely intellectual approach to art was, therefore, impossible. On this point, older artists like Denis and the young artists of the Gilde not only opposed the sentimentality of bad church art; they had also rejected the solution of earlier liturgical movements—the Nazarenes and the Beuron school—to eliminate emotion as much as possible from art.⁷⁹ Starting from 1868 and continuing into the early 1900s, the artists of the Beuron school produced monumental liturgical art based on models that were admired and used by Charlot himself, like medieval art and Giotto; the Beuron artists even emphasized mathematical relations in composition. But for Charlot, all that counted for nothing because of their attempt to purge art of emotion, an attempt he ridiculed along with the pretentious pseudo-biblical clothing of the Nazarenes.⁸⁰ Charlot in fact thought it was impossible to do real art without emotion; when I asked him how these liturgical artists thought they could, he only shrugged. Indeed in his French writings on art, he emphasizes the importance of emotions. The art of Beuron was more an illustration of a dominating theory than a personal response and creation. Charlot recognized the problem in Maya art where a mask of “purely symbolic structure,” provided by the priests, “implies no special emotional reaction from the spectator” (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 301). Dogmatic pressure inhibited the artist just as teachers could lame their young students.

An essential purpose of liturgical art is to communicate a message, a complicated process that is the reason for a number of the positions taken by the artists. Most obviously, art is not an end in itself, art for art’s sake, but serves a higher purpose. Secondly, communication demands an audience, which places the artist in a social context and evaluates him at least in part by the effectiveness with which he reaches his viewers. Accordingly, the liturgical artists rejected what they considered the egoism, the extreme individualism, of many avant-garde artists and deliberately hermetic styles. Moreover, because the liturgical artists wanted to reach the larger public of the faithful, they rejected the idea of art as the production of luxury goods for the elite; an idea that was then and is still today the basis of the art market. Instead, they wanted to create artworks that were accessible to all because they were either public or cheap, such as murals, monumental sculpture, and prints.⁸¹ Indeed, a number of devotional art forms, like posters and holy cards, lent themselves admirably to the diffusion of art among the people. The particular focus of Charlot’s generation on architectural decoration arose from their historical situation: the widespread destruction of the war would necessitate a major program of reconstruction. The student of Mexican art history will recognize many of the above factors in the Mural Renaissance, and Charlot’s leadership in the direction of that movement drew certainly on his experience as a liturgical artist.

The visual communication of a religious message could be done properly only through good art. Denis describes the goal of Jan Verkade: “Son désir était de faire une œuvre ‘devant laquelle les pauvres pourraient prier et qui ne ferait pas fuir les artistes’” “His desire was to create a work “in front of which the poor could pray and which wouldn’t make the artists run away” (in Verkade 1923: XIV). For Denis, as will be seen below, bad art was dishonest and thus incompatible with the honesty of the artist and the message; for Charlot, bad art was blasphemous, as quoted earlier:

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. (Interview September 15, 1970)

This insistence on good art as the means to communicate a religious message forced the liturgical artists to defend themselves on two fronts. On the one hand, church officials supported their own bad taste by arguing that the people preferred bad art and found it more accessible. On the other hand, a growing number of artists and critics considered art-for-art the only pure esthetic stance. This view was not as strong during Charlot's French period as it would become later, and indeed the experience of the war moved some artists toward more communicative forms, just as the Vietnam war did later. Denis and others were part of the modern Symbolist movement in literature and the visual arts—in which communication was essential—as well as being proponents of the long Western tradition of art inspired by message. But the art-for-art position was already strong and would become the wave of the twentieth century. That position was used against the artists of the Mexican Mural Renaissance and has largely formed the art critical and historical evaluation of it:

I think even now there is a great misunderstanding of Mexican art because people think of it as propaganda art, and so nobody as yet, even now, has written about the art quality of Mexican art; it's always the propaganda qualities. (Interview November 28, 1970)

Through most of the twentieth century, art criticism unjustifiably ignored the role of communication in art, even though it was crucial to such modernists as Kandinsky and Tony Smith. An understanding of that role is in fact essential for understanding their enterprise and evaluating their art as art. In my opinion, the importance of message for Mexican artists is the reason their modern Classicism constitutes one of the strongest movements of twentieth-century art, whereas the contemporary European Neoclassicism is one of the weakest. The young liturgical artists, like Marguerite Huré in her article on Rodin (December 25, 1917), were acutely sensitive to the message of art; and in his art criticism, Charlot would become a master at recognizing the communicative qualities of painters not usually recognized for that virtue, like the abstract artist Josef Albers. Charlot would have to struggle all his life—in France, Mexico, and the United States—against the views and tastes of both ecclesiastics and esthetes.

The above sketch of the art-historical situation and concerns of the liturgical movement to which Charlot belonged demonstrates its distinctive character. I will now discuss in more detail that movement, its artists, and Charlot's relation to them. Indeed, many of Charlot's tastes in art and literature—medieval art, the Italian primitives,⁸² Claudel, and so on—were shared in the liturgical movement, although Charlot seems to have pushed his studies further than most.

The organization that Charlot joined was called officially La Gilde Notre-Dame, which was most often abbreviated to La Gilde and sometimes miswritten as “la Gilde de Notre Dame.” The members referred to themselves as *Gildeurs* and *Gildeuses* in their monthly bulletin, *La Gilde*.

I started, I think, being interested in art, liturgical arts, when we were in our teens. I wouldn't say early teens but middle teens nearly. There was a group of us in Paris. We were terribly interested in that renewal of liturgical art because the art of churches was mostly awfully bad, neo-Gothic and so on, and we were going to do great things. So we banded ourselves together in a group that was called the Notre-Dame Guild. We were very fervent both in our prayers and in our hearts. (ca. 1971 Charlot)

The name of the organization expresses the young artists idealization of the medieval guilds and their image of the artist as an artisan working in a team. Christian liturgical art associations have usually accepted this ideal as a rule, as did also the restorers of Notre Dame de Paris in the mid-nineteenth century:

The architects hoped that these working arrangements would approximate those of the thirteenth-century "image-makers," the master sharing bread and wine with his collaborators, all of them working together in anonymous community to achieve a common goal.⁸³

Charlot was thoroughly committed to artistic teamwork on large, multi-genre projects, and would cite the creation of the Parthenon and Vaux-le-Vicomte (1656–1661) as examples. As important as Vaux-le-Vicomte was in itself, the assembling of its production team of architects, artists, and garden designers laid the foundation for the cultural age of Louis XIV.

The organization's bulletin *La Gilde* is a rich source of information on the activities and thinking of its members.⁸⁴ The Abbé Léon Cadart, who was the church advisor to the Gilde and often addressed the Gildeurs, provides some history of the organization in the first issue, probably of October 25, 1917, in his article "Pourquoi ce journal ?" 'Why this bulletin?'⁸⁵ He admits that there has been "quelque inquiétude au sujet de la *Gilde*" 'some apprehension on the subject of the *Gilde*,' but asserts that the organization does not want to compete with other groups or divide the Catholic artists. Some years ago, students from the Beaux-Arts and the Arts Décoratifs attended religious talks designed for them at the church of St. Germain des Prés. The students met together a few more times. In 1915, another series of talks was given at the same location, and several women organized the Missionnaires de Sainte Geneviève to proselytize in the art world:

l'idée génératrice de *la Gilde Notre-Dame* ; non pas grouper des artistes catholiques, mais promouvoir l'apostolat religieux parmi le monde artistique.

'the generating idea of the *Gilde Notre-Dame*; not to group Catholic artists, but to promote the religious apostolate in the art world.'

But two years of tentative efforts, probably from 1915 to late 1917, were needed to find a proper form of organization for this effort. That final form has now been achieved:

un idéal précis ; promouvoir l'apostolat religieux parmi les artistes ; une organisation composée de deux groupements : celui des Missionnaires et celui des membres de *la*

Gilde ; des réunions hebdomadaires, conférences, concerts, expositions ; une formation religieuse : messe mensuelle, retraite annuelle.

‘a precise ideal: to promote the religious apostolate among artists; an organisation composed of two groups: the missionaries and the members of *la Gilde*; weekly meetings, conferences, concerts, exhibitions; religious education: monthly mass, annual retreat.’

The Gilde now has more than a hundred members, who are animated by charity toward each other and desirous of bringing other artists into the church.

The Gilde started therefore with informal meetings among young Catholic artists after a series of talks. In 1915, a formal missionizing effort was organized by a group of women under the patronage of St. Genevieve, the patron saint of artists. This was in accordance with the standard practice of the French church to target the elite; *La Gilde* describes its organization as “un organisme très actif, très puissant, type du groupement des élites artistiques” ‘a very active, very forceful organism, a type of grouping of artistic elites’ (“Vie de ‘la Gilde’ en 1917” January 25, 1918). In 1916, a third series of lectures was given by Cadart, and the group adopted its name; its existence was noted by Pierre de Lescure in the *Revue des Jeunes* of November 25, 1916:

un groupe...qui se propose de travailler au renouveau catholique. Il s’agit de la Gilde de Notre-Dame, qui a voulu associer en un groupement fraternel les artistes qui adhèrent d’âme et de vie à un idéal nettement catholique...

‘a group...which proposes to work for the Catholic renewal: the Gilde de Notre-Dame, which has wanted to associate in a fraternal grouping those artists who adhere with soul and life to a clearly Catholic ideal...’

The number of artists joining the group rose rapidly from 1915 through 1916; *La Gilde* reports that membership grew substantially in 1917 and that one hundred artists were included in the annual exhibition (“Vie de ‘la Gilde’ en 1917” January 25, 1918). As these new artists joined, they brought with them their own concerns and emphases. That this created some friction is revealed by the fact that the final form of the Gilde recognized two different *groupements*. Indeed, the bulletins will announce the scheduling of a regular “Réunion des Missionnaires” ‘Meeting of the Missionaries’ that was separate from those of the artists. Those of the *Missionnaires* are described as “séances missionnaires, sorte de Sénat directeur” ‘missionary sessions, a sort of directing Senate’ (“Vie de ‘la Gilde’ en 1917” January 25, 1918). The issue of December 25, 1917 (1, “Un mois de travail”), will report that at one such meeting the *Missionnaires* complained that the bulletin devoted too much space to summaries of conferences and not enough room for their own notices and activities. The two tracks of the composite organization can be seen in the attachment of a lottery for the “missions du Midi” ‘missions to the center of France’ to the second art exhibition of the Gilde (“L’Exposition” March 25, 1918). Cadart’s description of all the members being animated by charity is probably partly an appeal.

Charlot’s remarks on the history of the Gilde accord with the contemporary sketch of Cadart:

Now how we got together, I don't know, but there may have been half a dozen people, and then, I would say the Church, which is a vague way of saying it, but people in the Church saw a possibility of, well, using us, using us of course for a good purpose. So there is an order, the name I forgot, of women that at the time went around. They were nuns, but they didn't have the habit, and they went around and were in charge of—I was going to say desperate cases, but that isn't—but difficult cases, and one of those nuns was assigned to us and whipped us into cohesion, made us, for example, write the constitutions of the guild. And then a very nice priest, he was a Jesuit incidentally, was assigned to us as our chaplain and our spiritual director. And we were very happy to have the help, of course, of the Church, and all that gave form and figure to what would have been simply a group of artisans if we had not been helped from outside. However, the other party, shall we say, the Gilde St. Jean, was not too happy at seeing us coming in.⁸⁶

Charlot seems to have been one of the young Beaux-Arts who met informally after the talks at St. Germain des Prés in 1915. This group was taken in hand by the Missionnaires de Sainte Geneviève, who helped them organize and saw that they were provided with an ecclesiastical advisor. Charlot was more precise than Cadart on the “inquiétude” caused by the formation of the Gilde:

Now, I had also a sort of a first knowledge of the world as it is, that is, in its imperfection. When we did that Gilde Notre-Dame, we were approached by emissaries of another guild, which was the St. John's Guild. The Gilde St. Jean, I think was the name, and that was, Maurice Denis was its star artist, and they had better channels than we had, certainly, to get commissions from the Church, but nevertheless they saw us as a possible rival, maybe I shouldn't be catty and say in liturgical commissions, but it came pretty much to that. And so the two groups that should have worked together, because both were in very good faith and both were made up of very religious people, artists by craft, there was a friction, and there was a certain desire to really annul us or simply force us to join with Gilde St. Jean. So we learned a little bit there about the politics of the world, which came to us as a surprise. The other people were older people, in their thirties, some of them as old as their forties. Maurice Denis was in his forties then, and we learned that everything wasn't simply the relation of people to God, but man to man is a much more difficult relation in a way than man to God. It's so full of frictions. (Interview October 7, 1970)

The correct name of the “Gilde St. Jean” (commonly referred to as the Société de Saint-Jean) was the Société de saint Jean pour l'encouragement de l'art chrétien ‘the society of St. Jean for the encouragement of Christian art,’ and it provided the venue for the exhibition of February 1917 (?) and for those from December 1920 to January 1921 at which Charlot exhibited.⁸⁷ The rival organization need not have worried about losing commissions:

Well, there was no jealousy proper. I think there were some people behind the artists in the St. John Guild who were practical, who were desirous to get Church commissions, and saw us as possible rivals. In that case, they were quite wrong, because we never got a single paid commission from the Church... So there was no reason for jealousy, but just that those people didn't know how little practical we were. (Interview October 7, 1970)

Charlot was happy emotionally and ideologically to be a member of an association, but he did not disappear into it as an anonymous craftsman. He quickly became one of the Gilde's most prominent figures. His lecture "Nous les Jeunes !" was apparently the only one to be published in full in *La Gilde*. He was mentioned in that bulletin more often and at greater length than the other young artists;⁸⁸ and he was discussed in other publications as well. He showed his works in the exhibitions and won prizes. That is, Charlot's ideals were egalitarian, but from his childhood on, he tended to distinguish himself and to rise in any group he joined through his understated but strong leadership qualities. I believe that Charlot was ambivalent about this capacity of his—except in the army where it was entirely appropriate—and, as in rearing his children, veiled it with tact. I would say that he had a naturally dominating personality and resisted the temptation to be domineering. In any case, Charlot's combination of artistic prominence and quiet leadership was evident in the early stage of the Mexican Mural Renaissance and helps to explain his role in that movement and why Diego Rivera considered him a threat.

Moreover, Charlot tended to resist group pressure, revealing an ornery rebelliousness even in the army. He never succeeded in pressing his individualistic personality perfectly into his communitarian ideals; his character would assert itself when pushed. Curiously, this reserve seems to have aided him in an important aspect of his relationship with other members of his groups. The older mentors of the Gilde, although artistically progressive, belonged to the extreme right wing of the Catholic church on most issues. Charlot was able to work with them and preserve his own views. In Mexico, on the contrary, Charlot's colleagues were mainly Marxists; again, he was able to work with them on all their common goals and remain himself. Contemporaries were surprised that Charlot could have such cordial relations with such different people, but his character as well as his family and work experience led him to respect others as he did himself.

Anne and Odette also joined the Gilde, participating in the musical activities; all three are listed among the renewing members (March 25, 1918: 4): "Mme Charlot, musicienne.—Mlle Charlot, musicienne.—M. Charlot, décorateur" 'Mrs. Charlot, musician.—Miss Charlot, musician.—Mr. Charlot, decorator.' The fact that they renewed their membership at the same time probably indicates that they joined at the same time as well. Their belonging to the Gilde made it a family project, probably one of several activities that strengthened their family bonds at the time.

Charlot experienced in the Gilde the cordial support and team spirit he sought all his life. He was photographed smiling with two Gildeuses, Marguerite Huré and Renée Trudon, at a Gilde exhibition, and the mentions of Charlot in *La Gilde* are affectionate. Charlot kept a caricature *ex libris* of himself done at the time: he is shown with a patchy beard and disheveled hair, dressed in Bohemian fashion, and

holding a pile of eight books before a wall of filled bookshelves; books large and small are spread around the floor. An inscription provides a motto: “Sa Vie Fut Une Longue Lecture” ‘His Life Was a Long Read.’⁸⁹ Charlot was indulging in certain eccentricities at times during his life in France; Brenner wrote that he was asserting his Parisian identity “by adopting the almost discarded traditional night-cap” (1970: 303). Charlot himself related the Gilde to the group of muralists he enjoyed in Mexico:

The workshop atmosphere and approach to aesthetics through crafts [of the Gilde] served me well later on when, a world war having elapsed, I found myself in Mexico as a member of another group, made up this time of fearful fellows who made the bourgeois cringe, and shook the walls they painted on. They had this in common with me and the pious French friends I had left behind, that they too were humble craftsmen, good at their trade, which is a kind of virtue. (*Born Catholics* 1954: 101)

The *Gildeurs* and *Gildeuses* participated in a large number of activities: sales of the members’ artworks and other items, year-end parties, fund-raisers, and lotteries for charity. At least one of these activities was patriotic: the “Manifestation annuelle, en mai, pour la fête de Jeanne d’Arc” ‘Annual display in May for the feast of Joan of Arc’; a lecture was also offered on “Jeanne d’Arc dans la Poésie & dans l’Art” ‘Joan of Arc in Poetry & Art.’⁹⁰ Other activities were purely religious like the monthly Mass and the annual retreat. Courses were offered in music, and concerts were given by the Gilde’s choir, the Schola de la Gilde; the singers, including Anne and Odette, made a trip to Italy with their teacher, the composer Vincent d’Indy. Courses were offered in diction. The *Gildeurs* did not confine their activities to the organization; *La Gilde* alerted its members to exhibitions in Paris, such as those of Tsugouharu Foujita (1886–1968) and Georges Hanna Sabbagh (1887–1951), and to musical events; the sets and costumes of a production of *Antoine et Cléopâtre* were reviewed.⁹¹

Two important Gilde activities were the annual exhibitions and lectures with related discussions and even days of discussion. The Gilde probably held small or informal exhibitions in 1916 and 1916; the photograph of Charlot and the two *Gildeuses* seems to have been taken at such an event. The Gilde started its larger *Exposition annuelle* in February 1917, drawing one hundred exhibitors, one hundred and fifty items, and 1,500 visitors, and attracting many to join the organization (“Vie de ‘la Gilde’ en 1917” January 25, 1918). Charlot noted his participation: “1917—Exp. Gilde Notre-Dame. (sculpture—paintings) rue de la Paix, Paris” (“Accomplish. 4—” Nov. 1930). The second annual exhibition was announced for May 23 to 25, 1918.⁹² All the *Gildeurs* were urged to submit their new works “qui incarnent le plus profondément leur caractère personnel” ‘which embody most profoundly their personal character.’ As in the previous year, all submissions would be received, but due to the large number of works expected, a jury of artists and art critics had been appointed to make a selection. Besides participating in their own shows, the *Gildeurs* submitted their work to others. Charlot’s first participation in a formal exhibition was in “1915—Sculpture at Exposition des Art Décoratifs. Pavillon de Marsan, Paris” ‘Sculpture at the Exhibition of Decorative Arts, Pavillon de Marsan [Louvre], Paris’ (“Accomplish. 4—” Nov. 1930”). He confused this with his later exhibitions of liturgical art at the same location:

Now, we would get together and try to have shows of our own, the Gilde Notre-Dame, and we presented our things to shows, for example, the Show of Decorative Arts, that was in the Louvre in the wing of the Pavillon de Marsan, and I did get some sort of prizes there for the woven stuff, I think, and also one for a *Way of the Cross* in woodcut. (Interview October 7, 1970)

Many of the lectures, the other major Gilde activity, were by priests connected to the Gilde, such as Cadart and Paquier, and others interested in various aspects of the arts. Several lectures were by luminaries of the Catholic art world: the Benedictine Dom Jean-Martial Besse (1861–1920), a long-time leader in the liturgical art movement, Maurice Denis, and Vincent d'Indy, who belonged to the musical wing of the progressive movement of Denis' generation (Denis 1918: 519). The quality of the lectures was high and usually represented the progressive theology of the time—one lecturer advocated saying the Mass facing the people⁹³—and the modernist movement in liturgical art. The younger members of the Gilde, still art students, would also discuss their art and other topics both in group discussions and in lectures:

M. Achard, sculpteur de la technique et de l'art en sculpture ; M. Charlot, peintre, de l'esthétique des jeunes et de la probité artistique ; Mlles Trudon et Huré, peintre et sculpteur, de la possibilité d'un art populaire... ("Vie de 'la Gilde' en 1917" January 25, 1918)

'Mr. Achard, sculptor, on technique and art in sculpture; Mr. Charlot, painter, on the esthetics of young people and on artistic probity; Miss Trudon and Miss Huré, painter and sculptor, on the possibility of a popular art...'

Charlot's first lecture, "Nous les Jeunes !" of November 1916, was published in its entirety in *La Gilde* and is thus Charlot's first published article. His "La Probité Artistique: Adresse à la Gilde Notre-Dame" is dated March–April 1917, and he addressed the Gilde again in March 1919 on the war, life, religion, and art.

Most of the lectures were on the arts and religion, but other topics are listed like "Le Féminisme." Réal-del-Sarte spoke on "Du Chef-d'Œuvre du plus pur Génie français au Chef-d'Œuvre de la Barbarie scientifique allemande" 'From the Masterpiece of the purest French Genius to the Masterpiece of German scientific Barbarism', an expression of the artistic jingoism of the time; Father Cadart lectured that the artist works "en même temps pour la Religion et pour la Patrie" 'at the same time for Religion and for Fatherland' (November 25, 1917: 3). The lectures were formal, the speakers reading from prepared texts, which could then be quoted at length in *La Gilde*; most talks, however, were summarized in a report.

Some of the early lectures were sparsely attended because of lack of publicity (later ones because of the German artillery bombardments), but attendance grew rapidly. Gilde members would arrive early and conduct friendly discussions after the lecture ("Un Mois de Travail" December 25, 1917). The Gildeurs were a critical audience. A member writes of a lecturer, considered good by the young artists, that "nous n'aurions pas besoin de garder envers lui la défiance que de si nombreux maîtres nous

ont habitués, à leur insu, à leur opposer” ‘we won’t have to have the same wariness toward him that so many masters have, all unawares, accustomed us to have against them’ (Untitled, March 25, 1918). *La Gilde* even refers to “Réunions hebdomadaires avec conférences conradictiores [*sic*]” ‘Weekly meetings with contradictory lectures’ and continues:

C’est surtout dans ces réunions de famille que la vie de la Gilde se manifeste avec une particulière intensité. Chaque conférence est suivie d’une vive discussion où les idées de l’orateur sont serrées de très près. (“Vie de ‘la Gilde’ en 1917” January 25, 1918)

‘It’s especially in these family reunions that the life of the Gilde reveals itself with a particular intensity. Each lecture is followed by a lively discussion in which the ideas of the speaker are pressed very hard.’

The Gildeurs could also be appreciative:

M. Maurice Denis est venu à la Gilde en ami—très simplement. Et sa causerie vivante, nuancée, riche de pensée et de souvenirs, nous a livré son âme sympathique et rayonnante. Par delà le Maître nous avons deviné l’homme. (“La Conférence de M. Maurice Denis” January 25, 1918: 1)

‘Mr. Maurice Denis came to the Gilde as a friend—with great simplicity. And his lively, nuanced talk, rich in ideas and memories, revealed to us his sympathetic and radiant soul. Beyond the Master, we divined the man.’

The same spirit animated the group discussions for which the topics were interesting. Those proposed for a meeting of April 29, 1918, were:

1^{er} sujet : Rodin dit : l’Inspiration n’existe pas, les seules qualités d’un artiste sont : sagesse, attention, sincérité, volonté. Accomplissez votre besogne comme d’honnêtesouvriers [*sic*].

2^o Dans les villes détruites existaient des quartiers très pittoresques mais très malsains. Doit-on perdre l’espoir de les faire revivre ? Dont-on sacrifier l’art à l’hygiène ? (Plum January 25, 1918)

‘First subject: Rodin says: Inspiration does not exist; the only qualities of the artist are: wisdom, attention, sincerity, will. Do your job like honest workers. Second: In the now destroyed cities were some very picturesque but very unhealthy neighborhoods. Should one abandon hope to revive them? Must one sacrifice art to sanitation?’

The first topic echoes Huré’s focus on Rodin in her article for *La Gilde*. The second was an example of the general discussion of the reconstruction that would be needed after the war. A lecturer, Pichon, proposed the Middle Ages as an adaptable model for the present:

Les corporations qui firent fleurir si merveilleusement l’art au moyen-âge étaient soumises à des disciplines quasi-monacales et les alternances paisibles de la prière et

du travail favorisaient l'éclosion du chef-d'œuvre.

Ne devons-nous pas souhaiter retrouver des conditions voisines de celles qui avaient suscité ces groupements, ne devons-nous pas désirer la création d'écoles d'art, où une vie chrétienne intense, avec les disciplines reconstituées, complèteraient intimement les scrupuleuses observances du métier bien appris et les consciencieuses recherches professionnelles.

Il faut songer à rebâtir nos cathédrales, il est donc de toute nécessité de former nos architectes et nos sculpteurs, nos peintres, nos verriers, nos imagiers; la beauté de la cathédrale et la valeur de nos artistes rejaillirait sur la cité et, c'est à l'artiste mû par l'amour qu'est réservée l'*inspiration* qui souffle, là où souffle l'Esprit.⁹⁴

'The corporations that made flourish so marvelously the art in the Middle Ages were submitted to quasi-monastic disciplines, and the peaceful alternations of prayer and work favored the blossoming of masterpieces.

Should we not want to find again conditions near those that have given rise to these associations, should we not desire the creation of schools of art in which an intense christian life, with reconstituted disciplines, would complete intimately the scrupulous observance of the well-learned craft and the conscientious professional researches.

We must think of rebuilding our cathedrals. It is thus absolutely necessary to form our architects and our sculptors, our painters, our stained-glass workers. The beauty of the cathedral and the value of our artists will surge out again over the city, and it is to the artist moved by love that the *inspiration* is reserved that will breathe there where the Spirit breathes.'

The purpose of reconstruction determines the priority of the arts listed. The Gilde and the Société Saint-Jean were preparing in advance for reconstruction:

Ensuite la Société de Saint-Jean organise un concours public de Chemin de Croix particulièrement intéressant puisqu'il s'agit d'œuvres populaires destinées à être installées dans les églises que nous allons reconstruire. Il faut se servir de procédés pouvant se prêter à la diffusion à bon marché. (Plum January 25, 1918)

'After this, the Société de Saint-Jean is organizing a public competition on the Way of the Cross, particularly interesting because it concerns popular works destined to be installed in the churches that we are going to reconstruct. It is necessary to use processes that can lend themselves to inexpensive dissemination.'

I believe this competition was the reason why in 1918 Charlot abandoned the project for a series of images of saints and began his own woodcut series, *Chemin de Croix*. The Gilde also supported the Société des Amis des Cathédrales, the mission of which was to raise money for the reconstruction of churches ("Informations" March 25, 1918).

Charlot remembered the conferences positively:

We would get together when we could, I think twice a month; we had some very interesting speakers that we managed to get. Maurice Denis was one of them, and we had some of the priests of the time who were in accord with our own ideas of devotion, and it was a good training. The quality of, well, worldly vocation, of professions that we had, were all around art and mostly the visual arts. (Interview October 7, 1970)

The conferences provide many points of comparison and contrast with Charlot's own thinking. Charlot shared at the time the Catholic rhetoric about the failures of the modern world and the chances for the revival of religion. He participated in the support for good Church art as opposed to bad. Charlot agreed with the view that art should be directed toward a large public. He marked the passage in E. V.'s report on Zenon-Fière's talk on "Tolstoï et ses Idées sur l'Art":

En peinture, son critérium que l'œuvre d'art vraie est celle qui réunit le plus d'hommes dans l'amour, il n'en trouve naturellement pas beaucoup qui remplissent son idéal.⁹⁵

'In painting, his criterion that the true work of art is that which reunites the greatest number of human beings in love, not many, naturally, can be found who achieve his ideal.'

Charlot agreed emphatically with the general emphasis on artisanship and craft: "It's from that time that I get that sort of dislike for the word *artist* and that I prefer the word *artisan* because each one of us was thinking of art in terms of specific crafts" (Interview October 7, 1970). A related theme of Charlot's thinking is the humility of the artist, agreeing with Father Cadart's statement: "L'humilité est nécessaire. C'est 'la base du génie' dit le père Gratry" 'Humility is necessary. It is "the basis of genius," says Father Gratry.'⁹⁶ This point was part of the larger emphasis on the artist's need to be a good person in order to create good art (e.g., "Conférences de la Gilde Notre-Dame par M. Clément Besse (Novembre 1918)" December 1918). The lecturer Pichon articulated several more specialized points that supported Charlot's own continuing definition of his role as a Christian artist: "quel est le but de l'artisan chrétien ? Est-il un être d'exception, doit-il vivre à part, en marge de la société, distant des autres hommes ses frères ?" 'what is the goal of the Christian artisan? Is he an exceptional being, should he live apart, on the margin of society, distant from other men, his brothers?' (M. de C. March 25, 1918: 1). Pichon sees the artist-artisan living morally in the world: "L'artiste a les mêmes devoirs de famille, de société, de religion que tous..." 'The artist has the same duties of family, society, and religion as all...' The artist has the further duty of using his special, God-given talents for God's purposes:

de construire par son œuvre la cité nouvelle juste et belle, parce que cité de Dieu. Il restera donc dans la vie pour la connaître et en pouvoir traiter, et pour l'interpréter il en demandera l'intelligence à l'église catholique, à ce *sens catholique* qui par l'amour et le travail lui sera devenue comme intime et consubstantiel.

‘to construct by his work the new city, just and beautiful, because city of God. He will remain indeed in life in order to know it and be able to treat it, and to interpret it, he will ask for understanding from the Catholic Church, from that *Catholic sense* which through love and work will become for him intimate and consubstantial.’

To do his work, the artist must acquire “les qualités de métier...probité, travail, association...” ‘the qualities of craft...probity, labor, association...’ The word *probité* appeared in Charlot’s own address to the Gilde of March–April 1917, and he used the traditional image of the city in his poetry of the period.

Several clear disagreements can be found between the lecturers and Charlot’s own developed thinking, notably, the adherence of several to a spiritualist, immaterialist view that downgraded the physical and consequently art itself. The frequent lecturer, Father Cadart, for all his good points, basically places the material lower than the immaterial and thus art lower than intellect. In his “Pourquoi ce journal ?” (October 25, 1917), he calls to the Gilde “toutes les âmes éprises de l’immatérielle Beauté” ‘all souls captivated by immaterial Beauty.’ In his lecture series reported in *La Gilde* (November 25, 1917, 3 f.), he bases the importance of the artist on the fact that human beings are not influenced by reason and intellect alone but by sensibility and will: “la puissance considérable de l’art qui agit directement sur la sensibilité par l’intermédiaire des sens” ‘the considerable power of art which acts directly on sensibility by the intermediary of the senses.’ Indeed, that dependence on the senses is dangerous: “Tout art comporte une part de sensualité—étant donné qu’il agit dans l’âme par l’intermédiaire des sens. Il comporte par conséquent un danger subtil contre lequel il faut se mettre en garde” ‘All art comports a portion of sensuality—given that it acts in the soul by the intermediary of the senses. It comports in consequence a subtle danger against which it is necessary to put oneself on guard.’ For Cadart, the artist’s greatest suffering is that the fallen, sinful world is so much less beautiful than the one the artist imagines: “c’est la disproportion douloureusement sentie et constatée de la réalité qu’il ébauche avec le rêve qui l’enchant” ‘it is the disproportion, dolorously felt and apprehended, of the reality he sketches with the dream that enchants him.’ Nevertheless, some of Charlot’s statements in “Nous les Jeunes !” are nearer to this view than his later thinking was, as will be seen below.

The same semi-Jansenistic view can be found in Marguerite Huré’s “Rodin”:

Rodin a fait des corps.

Et maintenant qu’il n’a plus son propre corps, qu’il est une âme seulement, il doit en être bien embarrassé...

La matière molle et forte, tendre, chaude, gonflée de désirs et ruisselante de lumière de la chair, voilà l’adoration de Rodin l’Erotique...

Partout, c’est la chair qui palpète, qui vibre, qui tremble de désir, d’attente, de force, d’étouffement, de stérilité, d’écrasement, d’inassouvissement : Là tout se dirige, tout dérive plutôt, c’est le prélude, le nœud, la fin du chant entier. “J’ai faim et je ne puis me rassasier.” C’est le goût très amer qui reste de l’impression même la plus enivrante causée par l’œuvre entière. Quelle morale prochaine et sublime à en tirer et comme tout cela est clair pour un chrétien !⁹⁷

‘Rodin made bodies.

And now that he no longer has his own body, now that he is only a soul, he must be very embarrassed...

Matter soft and strong, tender, warm, bloated with desires and drenched with the light of the flesh, that was the adoration of Rodin the Erotic...

Everywhere, it is the flesh that palpitates, vibrates, trembles with desire, with waiting, force, suffocation, sterility, being crushed, with dissatisfaction: to that point everything is directed, or rather everything is derived. It is the prelude, the climax, and the end of the entire song. “I hunger and cannot be satisfied.” This is the very bitter taste that remains of even the most inebriating impression caused by the whole *œuvre*. What an immediate and sublime moral is to be drawn therefrom and how clear is all that for the Christian!’

Despite her religious perspective, Huré displays great understanding in her response to Rodin and in her positive appraisal is acutely sensitive to his greatness:

Mais cette œuvre est composée de trouvailles de génie. Chaque statue renferme des visions inconnues, nouvelles ; pour les exprimer, un métier solide et fort, ineffablement humble, asservi à l’idée et faisant corps avec elle, donnant une forme en beauté à la volupté rendue acceptable, noble et digne par celui qui en avait fait sa seule religion, la raison d’être de la vie.

‘But this body of work is composed of discoveries of genius. Each statue encloses new, unknown visions; to express them, a solid and strong craft, ineffably humble, subjected to the idea and incorporated with her, giving a beautiful form to voluptuousness made acceptable, noble, and worthy by him who made of her his only religion, the reason-to-be of life.’

Charlot also was able to comprehend, appreciate, and articulate the art and message of works dissimilar to his own. Rodin seems to have been appreciated by the members of La Gilde; his remarks on Gothic cathedrals were published without comment (“Rodin et les Cathédrales” March 25, 1918).

A point more particular to Charlot was the evaluation of other cultures and non-Western religions. A conventional view was expressed by the regular lecturer Paquier in one conference: the great pagan and Asian civilizations stagnate, and Christianity is the great cause of the superiority of the West (M. de C. March 25, 1918). However, in an earlier lecture, “Les Ressemblances entre les diverses Religions” ‘The Resemblances among the diverse Religions,’ he presented a more nuanced view (E. V. December 25, 1917). Although religious feeling is innate in human beings, all religions are not equal. Despite the similarities between Christianity and the other higher religions, Christianity remains transcendent. The similarities arise from human nature, from primitive revelation, and from the fact that religions have imitated Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity has borrowed elements from other religions. Basic human intelligence recognizes a natural law and formulates a natural religion. Christianity perfects nature rather than destroying it, so similarities should arise. Moreover, the higher religions have common

sources in history and primitive religion, the designation at that time for indigenous religions. Some scholars have argued for the importance of an extensive primitive revelation given by God and maintained in the diverse and widespread primitive religions. But that revelation could not have contained more than a few general points, and no evidence can be found of their widespread diffusion. Charlot himself, already a student and admirer of the Aztecs, would write much more positively on the subject; he was always an admirer of the Holy Pagans mentioned in the Bible. Indeed, a very positive description was given by another lecturer, André Villepique, of the religious impression made on him by the Sphinx (M. de C. March 25, 1918), and Classicizers like Denis considered the virtues of Greco-Roman art to be one result of primitive revelation.

Nevertheless, there were a number of lectures with which Charlot could have been in basic agreement, for example, Dom Besse's "L'Eucharistie & l'Art" given on October 29, 1917 (November 25, 1917). The liturgical artist can learn much from the primitive site of the Eucharist, the catacombs, and from early church art. The early Christian artists adopted symbols from nature and pagan mythology and baptised them; later Christian artists may and should do the same:

Leur art sut emprunter à la nature d'abord et ensuite à la mythologie païenne des symboles heureusement expressifs. Les artistes chrétiens de tous les âges se sont engagés dans la voie ainsi ouverte devant eux. Ce baptême de l'art païen a laissé des types que vous étudierez avec grand profit.

'Their art knew how to borrow first from nature and then from pagan mythology symbols that were fortunately expressive. Christian artists of all ages have engaged themselves on the path thus open before them. This baptism of pagan art has left models that you will study with great profit.'

The misuse of pagan art during the Renaissance was the result of the low level of religiosity of the time. The Protestant reaction against church art was extreme:

Tout se réduit chez eux à des lectures de la Bible et aux discours de leurs pasteurs. C'est bien peu, et ce peu ne laisse aucune place à l'art.

'Everything is reduced for them to readings of the Bible and talks of their pastors. It's little enough, and that little leaves no place at all for art.'

The Eucharist is the center of Christian practice and gives importance to the role of the artist: "à lui de créer, d'organiser, de parer le milieu dans lequel cet ensemble s'anime et fonctionne" 'his it is to create, to organize, to decorate the setting in which this ensemble is animated and functions.' In his liturgical period, Charlot would in fact use the Eucharist itself as one of his subjects.

Frantz Jourdain's lecture also contained much that Charlot and the other Gildeurs could agree with (E. V. April 25, 1918; direct quotations from Jourdain will be placed in double quotation marks and those from the reporter in single). Jourdain argued for the unity of art and rejected the division into major and minor arts: "Il n'y a pas de grand ni de petit art, le grand art c'est le beau, le petit art c'est le laid,

voilà la règle” ‘There is no great and no little art. The great is the beautiful, the little is the ugly, that is the rule.’ As knowledge progresses, art evolves and changes: ‘l’humanité a toujours fait de l’art moderne’ ‘humanity has always made modern art.’ That each period rejects the previous one is a sign of vitality. Unfortunately, modern science and mechanics have hurt art by providing works that are impersonal and without variety:

‘Où sont les artisans au moyen-âge qui travaillaient avec amour, au gré de leur imagination ? L’artiste, d’humble travailleur qu’il était, est devenu un personnage qui vit à part dans sa tour d’ivoire ; il ne se donne pas lui-même pour l’amour de l’art, mais travaille pour les musées.’

‘Where are the medieval artists who worked with love according to their imagination? The artist, humble worker that he was, has become a person who lives apart in his ivory tower; he does not give of himself for the love of art, but works for the museums.’

But it is the beauty of ordinary objects that creates the artistic grandeur of a people, beauty derived from the adaptation of their form to utility: ‘le manque de logique dans la construction, voilà le grand défaut moderne’ ‘the lack of logic in construction, that is the great modern defect.’ Shoddy goods and falsified beauty are being imposed on the people, deforming their taste with ugliness. Fortunately, a counter-movement is developing:

‘ses adversaires le déclarent boche, cela est faux, le mouvement moderne est français et les allemands ne discutent pas notre supériorité [*sic*] artistique, mais il faut l’affirmer.’

‘its adversaries call it boche. That is false. The modern movement is French, and the Germans don’t discuss our artistic superiority, but it is necessary to affirm it.’

Jourdain argues here against the French right wing and even some members of the avant-garde who were rejecting modern art movements as German and unpatriotic, for instance, derisively spelling *Kubism* and *Kultur* when discussing advanced art styles. Artists should use ancient art, not to reproduce it, but as a point of departure toward ‘une conception nouvelle’ ‘a new conception’: ‘Il faut que nous travaillions à nous refaire un art moderne, ayons la fierté et le respect de notre temps’ ‘It is necessary that we work to remake for ourselves a modern art. Let us have the pride and respect of our time.’ Jourdain closed his lecture with the words: ‘aimons le passé, mais travaillons dans le présent’ ‘let us love the past, but work in the present.’ This was truly a ringing call for a creative modernism.⁹⁸

By far the most important speaker and thinker for Charlot was Maurice Denis (1870–1943), whom Charlot recognized as an influence on his thought, quoted often, and echoed in his own writings: he “had played a rôle in the symbolist movement as a painter, and an even more substantial one as a critic.”⁹⁹ Indeed, Denis’ view of art criticism is itself a good description of Charlot’s own:

Les peintres qui réfléchissent et qui écrivent devraient donner des lumières, non pas seulement sur la structure extérieure des œuvres, mais sur leur psychologie intime, et

ainsi contribuer à dégager des idées générales ; ils devraient démêler où commence, où finit le jet de l'inspiration véritable, où s'aperçoit la paresse, la fébrilité, la hâte, jusqu' où la théorie aide à la nature et soutient l'inspiration, à quel point elle s'impose et déforme tout. (Denis 1912: 185)

'Painters who reflect and who write should shed light not only on the exterior structure of works, but on the intimate psychology, and thus contribute to the clarification of the general ideas; they should pick out the beginning and ending of the stream of true inspiration; the places where laziness, febrility, and haste can be seen; to what point theory helps nature and supports inspiration; at what point it imposes itself and deforms all.'

Denis' writing on art has the advantage of being based on the experience of a practicing artist and is thus attractive to other artists, whose own writings can echo his. Many of Denis' points were made later by Gleizes and Metzinger in 1912 in their *Du "Cubisme"* and by Gleizes and Gino Severini in 1921 (Gleizes 1921; Silver 1989: 264 ff.).

Denis articulated a simple and effective two-part scheme: "Déformation subjective" 'subjective deformation' occurred in the way the artist saw the world, and "Déformation objective" 'objective deformation' in the way he expressed that vision within the exigencies of a given medium (Denis 1912: 22 f., 26 f., 143, 259 f., 263, 267 ff.; 1918: 522–525, 529 ff.). Good expression followed the perennial rules of composition, which inform the great art of the West and even other high cultures (1912: 43, 84 f., 88 f.; 163, 228 f., 245, 262; 267 f.). Good compositions were effective because of the connection or correspondence between forms and emotions: "étroite correspondance entre des formes et des émotions !" 'close correspondence between the forms and the emotions'; "ces mystérieuses correspondances entre les belles formes et les beaux sentiments" 'these mysterious correspondences between the beautiful forms and the beautiful sentiments' (1912: 34; also 23, 50, 164, 180, 214 f., 259; 1922: 235). This teaching found a source in the poets Baudelaire and Rimbaud, especially his *Voyelles*, and led to the frequent comparison of poets and visual artists: "Tout peintre qui n'est pas en quelque façon poète est un mauvais peintre" 'Every painter who is not in some way a poet is a bad painter' (Denis 1912: 209). That is, Symbolist poets and Symbolist artists were following the same principles. Just as the poets would communicate their message indirectly through the creation of a symbol, all great art was "le travestissement des sensations vulgaires—des objets naturels,—en icones sacrées, hermétiques, imposantes" 'the reclothing of vulgar sensations—natural objects—into sacred icons, hermetic, imposing'; as a result, "L'Art est la sanctification de la nature..." 'Art is the sanctification of nature...' (Denis 1912: 12). Indeed, all great artworks, no matter what their subject, are "des œuvres religieuses" 'religious works' (268). These icons were not some conventional allegory to be decoded, but original images based on personal creativity (e.g., 17). The viewer's response was thus not elicited by the object represented, but by the artwork itself (10, 22, 40, 41, 243). The artist should, therefore, present his work as what it was and not try to fool the viewer with *trompe l'œil* or "dissimuler la matière employée" 'disguise the matter employed': "croyez que la *matière* de l'œuvre d'art a la faculté d'émettre d'aussi

puissantes suggestions que les aspects de la nature elle-même...” ‘believe that the matter of the artwork has the faculty of emitting suggestions as powerful as the aspects of nature itself’ (17).

Denis felt that Symbolism was basic to all art, but particularly appropriate for Christian: “tout chef-d’œuvre est symboliste. Or le symbolisme est une théorie chrétienne” ‘every masterpiece is symbolist. But symbolism is a Christian theory’ (42; also 35, 263). The reason for this was the truth itself of Christianity, while “la beauté est la forme visible de la vérité” ‘beauty is the visible form of truth’ (54). Indeed, the absolute, universal character of great art is a result of its expressing clearly and eloquently the divine order of God’s creation (268 f.): “Tous les ‘créateurs de l’Art’ ont créé selon mesure, nombre et poids, et partant, imité Dieu” ‘All “creators of Art” have created according to measure, number, and weight, and from the beginning, have imitated God’ (43). Christian art, above all others, should use only truthful means, not trompe l’œil (31).

A number of points were derived from this basic view. Art education and a knowledge of tradition were clearly essential for artists, not least because they preserved them from extravagance and excessive individualism (e.g., 201). Similarly, subjective deformation should be limited by objective knowledge of the thing to be represented; that is, there should be a balance between subjectivity and objectivity (267). Indeed, Denis felt that such a balance was characteristic of French art: “cette conciliation...instinctive entre la nature et l’idée” ‘this instinctive conciliation...between nature and idea’ (184). Following his appreciation of tradition, Denis based his own thinking on such earlier writings as those of Félibien and the statement of Poussin that the purpose of art is *délectation*, which Denis interpreted as “pour le plaisir des yeux” ‘for the pleasure of the eyes’ (26; this particular understanding of Poussin hindered Denis’ appreciation of Braque, 224). Denis was also transmitting the teachings of Gauguin and agreeing with many of his own contemporaries.¹⁰⁰ In this stream of classical teaching on art, Denis repeated such lessons as the need to subordinate all details more clearly to express the idea of the work (268). Denis believed in the traditional hierarchy of genres: there is no great work of art “dont le sujet soit seulement pittoresque” ‘of which the subject is merely picturesque’; no great artist was merely a virtuoso (268); Denis accordingly wanted to “réhabiliter le grand art et la peinture d’histoire” ‘rehabilitate great art and historical painting’ (194).

The specifically French tradition was being exalted by members of the French right wing like Barrès and Maurras, as Denis was well aware: “Le retour aux traditions, aux vérités françaises, l’instinct national réveillé par l’indignation patriotique” ‘The return to traditions, to French truths, the national instinct reawakened by patriotic indignation’ (264 f.). Denis and the Nabis had been seeking French sources since 1890 (184, 122 f.; 128 f.), and he articulated eloquently French art values and ideals: “avec des qualités vraiment françaises de précision et de clarté un double idéal de vérité et de beauté” ‘with truly French qualities of precision and clarity, a dual ideal of truth and beauty’ (89); “les qualités françaises de goût, de clarté et de mesure” ‘the French qualities of taste, clarity, and measure’ (184); “ce que la tradition française comporte de clarté, de mesure, d’atticisme : ce que nous appelons le goût français” ‘what the French tradition contains of clarity, of measure, of atticism: what we call the French taste’ (265). But he insisted that a critical sense, rather than idolatry, be brought to French art and that the artist should consult the broadest historical tradition (264 f.). In any case, modern art should not be

attacked for political reasons, as the right was wont to do (185).¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, during World War I, Denis became one of the principal denouncers of *l'art boche*.

As a critic, Denis has much of interest to say about “la structure extérieure des œuvres” ‘the exterior structure of works’; but, as quoted above, he is even more interesting on “leur psychologie intime” ‘their intimate psychology’ (185). Some points are traditional teaching but deeply felt. For instance, because the creative process is intensely personal, because the emotion of an artwork flows from the soul of the artist, his personality, his morality, and his philosophy are intimately connected to his art (e.g., 9, 213; 1918: 531). Denis is most eloquent on the crucible of Classical creativity: the relations between personal experience and perception and the ordering intellect. Denis saw the danger of Classicism becoming formulaic (265 f.): “J’ai peur du goût classique” ‘I fear the Classic taste.’ To avoid this, sensation must always remain the basis, and right procedure is “de la sensibilité particulière à la raison générale” ‘from particular sensibility to general reason’ (269; also 245 f.). The process is problematical: “C’est l’éternelle lutte de la raison et de la sensibilité qui forme les saints et les génies” ‘It is the eternal struggle between reason and sensibility that forms the saints and the geniuses’ (246). Sensation and sensibility belong to a certain time and place, so even the attempt to imitate the Masters results in invention (186). But the true artist must invent with deliberation, as Denis describes Fantin-Latour: “c’est sur les œuvres des anciens que ce réactionnaire si original appuya une sensibilité vraiment moderne” ‘it is on the works of the ancients that this so original reactionary supported a truly modern sensibility’ (186 f.). The great master of modern times, who was able to apply Classical order to the seemingly intractable but invaluable disorder of Impressionism, was Cézanne:

l’aboutissement de la tradition classique et le résultat de la grande crise de liberté et de lumière qui a rajeuni l’art moderne. C’est le Poussin de l’impressionnisme. (252)

‘the outcome of the classical tradition and the result of the great crisis of liberty and light that has rejuvenated modern art. He is the Poussin of Impressionism.’

The artists after Cézanne had to learn from their own experience the perennial principles of art, verify them in history, and use them to organize “les ressources fraîches de l’art moderne, *nos réalités*, elles nous ont permis de concilier l’exemple des Maîtres avec les exigences de notre sensibilité” ‘the fresh resources of modern art, *our realities*, have enabled us to conciliate the example of the Masters with the exigencies of our sensibility’ (266; also 265). In their own activity of enriching the tradition, they realized that “L’histoire de l’art, n’est qu’un perpétuel recommencement” ‘The history of art is only a perpetual recommencement.’ True Classicism results from the creative joining of spontaneous sensibility with the intellectual rules that give it concentration, power, and depth (269). For Denis, the advantage of Symbolism was:

de fonder un art très objectif, un langage très général et très plastique, enfin un art classique, sur ce qu’il y a de plus subjectif et de plus subtil dans l’âme humaine, sur les mouvements les plus mystérieux de notre vie intérieure. (270)

‘to found a truly objective art, a very general and plastic language, in the end a Classical art, on what is most subjective and most subtle in the human soul, on the most mysterious movements of our interior life.’

However well Denis realized that ideal in his artworks, his formulation of it was inspiring. It was also his ideal of liturgical art (1918: 531).

Denis’ talk to the Gilde, “De l’art symboliste à l’art religieux” ‘From Symbolist Art to Religious Art’ was announced in *La Gilde* of December 25, 1917, delivered on January 7, 1918, and reported in the issue of January 25, 1917.¹⁰² Charlot’s attendance was noted in *La Gilde*. He drew in his sketchbook a portrait of Denis reading his talk and took shorthand notes on it, which he later partially deciphered.¹⁰³ Denis summarized the principal themes of his writings, which must already have been known by most of the Gildeurs. The report states that Denis gave a very living sense of the Symbolism and its main proponents, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, Cézanne, and others. The movement was a reaction against materialism and naturalism and involved the collaboration of creative writers and artists (Denis 1918: 519 f.). The reporter comments:

Cette collaboration est une des pensées dominantes et une des directives essentielles de la Gilde. Elle suffirait à constituer notre originalité. Et qui ne voit l’importance d’une telle position et combien les artistes peuvent bénéficier du contact des poètes !

‘This collaboration is one of the dominant thoughts and essential directives of the Gilde. It would suffice to constitute our originality. And who does not see the importance of such a position and how much artists can benefit from contact with poets!’

Denis spoke of the early connections of those poets and artists with the Church, including the conversions of Huysmans, Verlaine, Claudel, and others. But the Symbolism of 1889 was essentially individualist and thus anarchic and could not last. The Dreyfus affair split the Symbolist community, and new schools arose; “On a remis en honneur les procédés abandonnés, la tempera, la fresque” ‘One honored again processes that had been abandoned: tempera, fresco’ (Denis 1918: 521). Symbolism was developed in the visual arts, of which Denis sketches the doctrine (522–525). The Symbolists brought with them into the Church their ideas of art, not as simple representation, but rather as a physical expression of the soul of the artist and its response to the subject of the work. Religious subjects and settings demand an even more intense discipline and sense of truth that banishes all illusionistic art as essentially a lie. An artwork must present itself clearly as such and not pretend to be anything else—God wants to be adored in the spirit and in truth. Yet the churches are full of falsified architecture and fake antiques, “du toc, du faux” ‘sham, fake’; a church looks old but is made of “ciment armé ; vos nervures ont du plâtre, et ne soulignent aucune nécessité de construction” ‘reinforced concrete; your vault ribs are plaster and mark no necessity of construction’ (527). The house of God itself is the furthest from the truth:

tout ce qui est faux, tout ce qui veut tromper n’est pas à sa place à l’église. Je réproouve votre orfèvrerie en chimique, votre faux bois, votre faux marbre, toute cette

camelote qui fait le fond du mobilier des églises modernes. Un autel en bois, en vrai bois, est plus digne du Sacrifice qu'un autel en carton pâte qui veut avoir l'air d'être en marbre et qu'enjolivent de fausses dorures. Respectons la sincérité, la vérocité des matières, créatures de Dieu.¹⁰⁴

'anything false, anything that wants to fool people is out of place in a church. I condemn your chemical gold work, your fake wood, your fake marble, all that gimcrack at the bottom of the furniture of modern churches. An altar in wood, in true wood, is more worthy of the Sacrifice than an altar in papier-mâché pretending to be marble and tricked out with false gilding. Let us respect the sincerity, the veracity of materials, creatures of God.'

But we should also avoid "le culte de nous-mêmes, le culte de l'artiste" 'the cult of "us ourselves," the cult of the artist.'¹⁰⁵ Religious art demands "un langage dépourvu d'orgueil, de mensonge, et par conséquent de rhétorique. Tout autre art se préfère à ce qu'il dit" 'a language emptied of pride, of falsehood, and in consequence, of rhetoric. Every other type of art prefers itself to its message.' In fact, falsity in art and sinful pride are connected in "l'orgueil de virtuosité" 'the pride of virtuosity' (529; compare 1912: 37). An openly Symbolist art is the most appropriate and traditional for Christianity (529 ff.). The published version of Denis' talk includes an important passage on the need for a modern religious art that will be an authentic expression of the religious experience of the artist (531). This passage does not, however, appear in Charlot's notes and may have been added later.

Charlot remembered Denis' talk clearly and throughout his life would profoundly agree with its central teaching:

we asked Maurice Denis to come and speak to us at the Gilde because he was probably the major Catholic artist in our circle at the time. I must say that of course Rouault was around and doing Catholic art, but he wasn't known yet...while Maurice Denis was quite in the news as *the* Catholic artist. In 1911 he had done the mural decorations for the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, among other things. And of course I've always felt that I was a mural painter even before starting doing murals, so I was interested on two counts in Denis: as a muralist on one side, as a Catholic artist on the other. And he was a very nice fellow, and he gave us a very nice talk on truthfulness in art in the sense that you shouldn't paint marble if you couldn't afford the real marble and you shouldn't put gold on wood which in itself is beautiful, and so on. It was very nice, a very nice talk.¹⁰⁶

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, and that thing remains perhaps his most important pronouncement, and he said it when he was nineteen or twenty years old:¹⁰⁷ that is, before being a horse in the battle or a portrait of your aunt, a picture is a flat surface with colors on it in a certain order

arranged. I think those are about the words of Denis, and it's a very important thing...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. (Interview September 17, 1970)

Maurice Denis; I should give him his share in those thoughts—the idea of the natural quality of the material and the respect with which the would-be artist has to treat his material. It was the material itself, let's say the wood or the stone if you carve in stone, or the glass if you do stained windows, and so on, has in itself a perfection of its own. It has certain natural qualities that should not be disturbed. One should collaborate with the material, and that has remained all through my life. (Interview October 7, 1970)

Even Charlot's later rhetoric would echo Denis'; e.g., "Earlier Text of 'Apologia'":

If Catholic art would only respect the nature of the material, stop disguising its infamous plaster into marbles and gold. A wooden statue that would exhibit the facets made by the axe in the carving process would have the virtue of humbleness, of truthfulness that would make it a virtuous act. A stone saint that would remain boulder shaped or block shaped would have a kind of physical righteousness that would make its obeissance to God's designs on its matter. (Summer 1951)

Many other points of contact can be found between Denis' thinking and Charlot's, like the major theme of the humility of the artist; I will mention others below. The differences between them are often ones of degree. Denis emphasizes the intellectual side of art more than Charlot, at least in certain passages (e.g., 1912: 46, 54). Denis' passages on the difficult subject of the relation of the artist's perception to the objective world differ among themselves, and Charlot could not have agreed with those that seem to exaggerate the subjective side, such as: "la nature peut donc n'être, pour l'artiste, qu'un état de sa propre subjectivité" 'thus for the artist, nature can be nothing more than a state of his own subjectivity' (267). Charlot differed radically from Denis in areas that were not of primary interest to the older artist, like the children's and primitive art (e.g., 168 ff.). Nonetheless, Denis' writings were valuable to Charlot as eloquent formulations of the experience of a practicing artist and influential discussions of the purpose of art from a Christian perspective.

I have concentrated on the thinking of the Gilde members and lecturers, because they can be most surely associated with Charlot. The circle of his enquiry was of course much wider—including artists like Poussin and writers like Félibien and Félix Fénéon—and statements similar to those already quoted can easily be found elsewhere. For instance, Pierre de Lescure in the *Revue des Jeunes*

(November 25, 1916) emphasizes the many points on which he agrees with Cadart, a choice of points that Charlot would have found agreeable as well. More right-wing French Catholic thought on art can be found in the contributors to *Agathon* 1913⁴. Against the individualist art-for-art views of Symbolists and Parnassians, Psichari argues that art should express a moral view and be useful to the community (*Agathon* 1913: 47 ff., 91 f.). More sympathetically, Pierre Hepp recognizes that art-for-art was a high ideal, “une très noble morale de producteurs” ‘a very noble morality of producers,’ that was abused and needs to be absorbed into a fuller view:

La saine pensée des jeunes, c’est que l’art est autre chose qu’un pur amusement d’esthètes, que, s’adressant, après tout, au genre humain, il est solidaire de l’activité générale, qu’il doit par conséquent reprendre contact avec elle et en suivre le courant s’il veut recouvrer son équilibre normal. ‘Devenir classique, c’est devenir plus honnête,’ a dit Maurice Barrès. L’opportunité de cette parole lui valut l’an dernier une fortune de mot d’ordre. Elle touchait juste. Aspirant au classicisme, nous en recherchons ardemment les conditions, lesquelles n’obligeront jamais aucun artiste à cesser de considérer ‘l’art pour l’art’ comme le premier de ses dix commandements de probité professionnelle. (232)

‘In the healthy thinking of young people, art is something other than a pure amusement for esthetes. Addressing itself, after all, to the human race, it is solidary with the general activity of life; in consequence, it must regain contact with life and follow the current if it wants to recover its normal equilibrium. “Becoming Classical is becoming more honest,” Maurice Barrès has said. The timeliness of this statement made it a famous slogan last year. It hit the spot. Aspiring to Classicism, we research ardently its conditions, which will never oblige any artist to stop considering “art for art” as the first of his ten commandments of professional probity.’

In contrast to the Gildeurs, the Catholic conservatives called for the rejection of modern forms and the return to Classicism, both in art and literature.¹⁰⁸ For Catholics in general, the contemporary discussion of art was connected to that of religion and politics. From the end of the nineteenth century, this Classicist esthetic had been connected by the right with a promotion of *ordre* ‘order,’ a key term used to express an integralist view of society that opposed itself both to the individualism of the nineteenth century and to the increasing religious, philosophical, and cultural pluralism of the modern world (e.g., Sutton 1982: 10–26). For the extreme right, the basis of integration was nationalism, which led to chauvinism and anti-Semitism. Moreover, the Church was seen as a principal element of integration, which led to clericalism. Further characteristic elements of conservatism became attached to this movement, such as a resistance to concern for the poor (e.g., Sutton 1982: 35 f., 145–153). The rightist view of the Church was attacked as utilitarian, the position adopted by Charlot in “Nous les Jeunes !.” Charlot also rejected anti-Semitism and clericalism, and his chauvinism was restricted to the French art tradition, although he was unusually knowledgeable about and appreciative of cultural differences. In his concern for the poor, he is near the Catholic social reformers, although he never adhered to a specific reform plan. Nonetheless, the right had defined much of the cultural discussion in Catholic circles, and

the word *ordre* appears often in *La Gilde* and Charlot's lectures to it. That word had, however, often lost its specific right-wing uses and had come to be used both in a generalized sense and in different senses; for instance, Maritain describes the general "nécessité de mieux en mieux sentie de rétablir l'ordre en soi-même..." 'necessity increasingly felt to reestablish order in oneself...' (in Agathon 1913: 208).

Charlot's use of *ordre* in his Gilde lectures must, therefore, be examined carefully. He does use the word in the sense of an overall design of reality; God did create the universe with a certain plan. However, on the political, social plane, he does not call for a return to a medieval domination by the Church. Although he would like people to be Catholics—and at the time saw conversion as one of the goals of liturgical art—he accepts the existence of different denominations and is appreciative of other cultures. Liturgical art will have a specific sense for Christians, but will also communicate a moral message that all human beings can appreciate. Modern society can achieve a moral unity beyond ideologies and denominations, for instance, in concern for the poor. Significantly, in his thinking on art, Charlot argues against the idea that Christianity demands a single style; the Gilde itself should provide a home for different schools of art whose members will be united by their fraternal charity. Charlot and the Gilde artists were finding their inspiration in medieval and modern art as well as Classical, and Charlot polemicizes against the Classical pastiches of bad Church art.

This position differentiates Charlot from several members of the avant-garde who were just entering into their wartime Classicizing movement, which would later be connected to the famous *rappel à l'ordre* 'recall to order' of 1919. This movement, which I will discuss later, was rooted in the chauvinism and xenophobia that had long been animating the French right.¹⁰⁹ In fact, in 1909 and earlier, Denis had already used the word *ordre* as the avant-garde would: "une évolution s'est faite en faveur de l'ordre" 'an evolution has been made in favor of order'; "un retour à la tradition des musées" 'a return to the tradition of museums'; "En littérature, en politique, les jeunes gens ont la passion de l'ordre" 'In literature, in politics, the young people have a passion for order.'¹¹⁰ Charlot used the word with a more religious sense in his poem of September–October 1916, *De la grâce en allégorie d'une Cité close que ses habitants désertent pour y retourner tôt après*: "Revenons à l'ordre." The avant-garde had good reason to be uncomfortable with their latest fashion. Significantly, the Gildeurs were neither conservative nor avant-garde Classicizers; they wanted to create an art that expressed their strong emotions in a style that was authentically modern.

Charlot's lecture "Nous les Jeunes !"—"Conférence de M. Charlot, Artiste décorateur"—was his first published article, running in *La Gilde* over five issues from October 1917 through March 1918.¹¹¹ The lecture was the first in a series announced by the Gilde, and although it was delivered in November 1916, the editors of *La Gilde* featured it in their first issue eleven months later. All this suggests that the lecture was considered an important expression of the views of the young generation of artists who constituted the main corps of the association; at the time, Charlot was eighteen years old. The lecture had in fact been noticed earlier: an extract had been published in the February–March issue of *Le Petit Messager des Arts et des Artistes, et des Industries d'Art*, and in his 1917 review of Charlot's textile designs, Abel Fabre had written:

En lui, nous pouvons saluer cette jeune école catholique dont il nous disait lui-même récemment les ambitions et les tendances dans une conférence à la Gilde de Notre-Dame.¹¹²

‘In him we can salute this young Catholic school whose ambitions and tendencies he himself described to us recently in a lecture at the Gilde Notre-Dame.’

This first Gilde lecture, like Charlot’s later two, was carefully composed. The presentation is reasoned and logical, organized around a conventional outline of a type that Charlot probably learned in school.¹¹³

Charlot begins by joking that he is like a child who is being allowed to speak after the adults have finished and is afraid to embarrass himself. The topic, his own generation, is complex, but he will discuss only two points: their religious position and their opinions on art. His generation is worth discussing, despite the stereotypes imposed on it, because it does represent the future; also, it cannot be understood except as a result of its past.

In chapter 3 “Childhood and Adolescence,” I have shown how Charlot’s description of their religious position is based on the Catholic rhetoric of the time. From being threatened and almost defeated by nineteenth-century scientism and similar trends, Christianity has reestablished itself: “Une génération avait suffi, pour que le monde, déchristianisé, désaxé, agonisant, recouvre la foi parfaite, l’ordre, la vie” ‘A generation sufficed for the world—dechristianized, thrown off center, agonizing—to recover perfect faith, order, life.’ The main point for Charlot is that his generation does not feel as threatened by and defensive about the modern world.¹¹⁴ Also, they no longer feel the need for certain solutions devised by the older generation, such as “le culte du moi” ‘the cult of the me,’ which Charlot finds an abstraction impossible to realize practically in the world. Denis had written in 1909 that his generation and later ones had abandoned “le culte du moi” for “des idéals collectifs” ‘collective ideals’ (1912: 263; see also 259), and urged young people to work in common (102); but he wrote in 1905 that “le culte de la Personnalité est toujours vivace” ‘the cult of Personality is still vigorous’ (196). Charlot no longer needs to consider “les dogmes comme un tremplin solide vers l’action” ‘dogmas as a solid springboard toward action,’ the utilitarian position identified with the right wing and expressed often by the essayists in *Agathon* (1913). Nor does Christianity need any longer to be excused or admired for purely esthetic reasons. Such views may have drawn people initially to the Church, but what transformed them from “catholiques d’étiquette” ‘Catholics by label’ into “chrétiens d’âme” ‘Christians in soul’ was the everyday experience that leads to certitude and an intimate personal faith. Charlot’s distinguishing use of the two terms, *catholique* and *chrétien*, shows that his religion is not based on denominationalism. In sum, the new generation reacts to the old sometimes with imitation and sometimes with rejection.

What then is distinctive about Charlot’s generation? Charlot believes that faith is the deepest trait that joins together the members of his generation beyond all divisions of society and intellectual culture and what distinguishes the faith of his generation is “la solidarité d’amitié qu’elle crée entre nous” ‘the solidarity of friendship that it creates among us.’ Charlot seems to be expressing here the friendly and supportive spirit of the Gilde. This group spirit differs from the individualism of the previous generation of Catholics, which Charlot seems to imply is a vestige of the earlier *culte du moi*. The faith

of Charlot's generation differs also from that of the periods when Christianity was intellectually and politically ascendant; the period on which the right expended much nostalgia. It is much nearer to the faith of the early Christians, a group large enough to feel themselves a great family, but still small enough to feel isolated in the pagan world: "ce mélange de solidarité familiale et de vague inquiétude en face de ce monde incroyant" 'this mixture of familial solidarity and vague disquiet before this unbelieving world.' However, unlike the Christians of the nineteenth century, Charlot's generation reacts with greater confidence in God and greater vigor in defending the faith. For instance, the antireligious philosophy of the nineteenth century proved incapable of reaching the essences and causes of things. Bergsonism, which he leaves unnamed, has demonstrated the importance of intuition: "le raisonnement atteint au matériel, à l'inorganique, l'intuition au spirituel, à la vie" 'reason reaches the material, the inorganic; intuition the spiritual, life.' Thomism correctly places reason under faith, but the two work together: "Croire pour comprendre, comprendre pour croire mieux, tel est l'ordre" 'Believe in order to understand, understand to believe better, that is order.' From faith clarified by philosophy can be deduced the practical moral rules of life. Their main thrust for Charlot is to reinforce the group spirit: "à nous détacher du point de vue égoïste : notre Moi est non en dehors de l'ordre, mais dans l'ordre" 'to detach us from the egotistical point of view: our Me is not outside order, but inside order.' This use of the word *ordre* is part of the Catholic rhetoric of the time as Charlot realizes: "nous avons reconquis le sens des respects traditionnels" 'we have won back the sense of traditional respect.'

A second characteristic of the faith of Charlot's generation is their spirit of apostolate, which they exercise, not so much in conventional proselytizing activities—which Charlot respects—but in trying to provide good examples. Charlot would continue this mode throughout his life, and it enabled him to work easily with people of very different views.

The art-making of Charlot's generation also flows from their particular religious ideas. Charlot describes with his humor of the time the stereotype of the young artist:

Qui dit "jeune peinture," évoque immédiatement aux yeux terrorisés des personnes de bon sens, une danse épileptique d'hirsutes rapins et de jeunes filles anarchistes, barbouillant frénétiquement des toiles cubistes et transperçant les bourgeois de leurs couteaux à palette.

'Whoever says "young painter" evokes immediately before the terrorized eyes of reasonable people an epileptic dance of hairy daubsters and anarchic young women, frenetically smearing Cubist canvases and stabbing the bourgeois with their palette knives.'

Charlot had not yet focused his attention on Cubism for his own use. Charlot wants to defend the school of young liturgical artists, but unfortunately they have not as yet created "aucune œuvre importante" 'any important work.' For this they need the financial support of the Church, that is, commissions. As seen above, the Gildeurs never did receive such commissions and this became a source of real discouragement. Some two years later, in "Paroles pour l'heure présente," published in *La Gilde* of April 25, 1918, the author laments:

Le temps où nous vivons n'est guère favorable aux artistes ni aux associations. Où trouver du travail?...

Que faire?—tenir.

C'est-à-dire, pour l'individu, s'approfondir, se concentrer, travailler, penser, réfléchir, se recueillir.

Pour le groupement, durer en simplifiant son action et ses manifestations, resserrer les liens de charité fraternelle.

Qu'éviter?—le nervosisme, ou le découragement, le pessimisme, l'abattement...

Artistes, élevons-nous jusqu'aux cimes—c'est l'heure de pratiquer le saint abandon des créatures du bon Dieu...

'The time we live in is hardly favorable to artists and associations. Where to find work?

What to do?—Hold on.

That is, for the individual, deepen yourself, concentrate yourself, work, think, reflect, collect yourself.

For the group, survive by simplifying your action and activities, tighten the bonds of fraternal charity.

What to avoid?—neuroticism, discouragement, pessimism, feeling beaten down...

Artists, let us raise ourselves to the peaks—it is the hour to practice the holy abandon of the creatures of the good God...'

Charlot will have to describe his generation's characteristics rather than their works.

The most striking characteristic is that the young artists consider themselves described best as artisans: "La plus frappante est que, pour nous 'artisan' est le mot qui découle plus directement d'art. Nous repoussons presque le titre d'artiste" 'The most striking is that for us *artisan* is the word that derives more directly from art. We almost spurn the title of artist.' That is, they are now in the period in which they are learning their craft. Denis also had used *artisan* as a praise word, but at the time, Charlot could find even Denis wanting.¹¹⁵

Rejecting prejudices and habits, the young artists study especially "des techniques abandonnées. On essaie la peinture à la fresque, la peinture à la colle, le bois polychromé" 'abandoned media. We try fresco painting, glue colors, polychromed wood.' This is Charlot's first surviving mention of fresco, and he was already working in polychrome wood bas-reliefs. The young artists reject oil painting, which despite its advantage of easy retouching, has the defect of difficult viewing because of its shiny surface and eventual crackling and color changes. Charlot is clearly thinking in terms of murals and retained this opinion all his life.

The above passage is closely paralleled by one in Denis' talk regarding his own generation, delivered over a year later: "On a remis en honneur les procédés abandonnés, la tempera, la fresque" 'One has returned to an honored place abandoned media, tempera, fresco' (1918: 521). I have not found these words or the point in Denis' earlier writings, and it is possible that he is echoing Charlot's own passage,

which he could have read either in *La Gilde* or found quoted in *Le Petit Messager des Arts et des Artistes, et des Industries d'Art*. Denis may have been asserting, as he was wont to do, that many new initiatives were parallels of the forgotten ones of his own earlier movement.

The young artists' choice of media, Charlot continues, is determined by the purpose of their work: "Cette sollicitude pour la visibilité, et la durée de nos toiles s'explique par la conception que nous nous faisons de l'art..." 'This solicitude for visibility and the lasting quality of our canvases is explained by our conception of art...' Their idea of art is different from that of the proponents of art-for-art. Art cannot be "un organisme indépendant, un être vivant en soi" 'an independent organism, a being living in itself'; "L'Art, détaché de toute cause et de tout but n'existe pas" 'Art detached from any cause and any purpose does not exist.' Art can only be understood in a social setting, as a means of communication: "L'Art est à la pensée ce que la voix est à l'homme : un mode de diffusion rapide et fidèle" 'Art is to thought what the voice is to man: a rapid and faithful means of diffusion.' The word is planted in the hearer like a seed and fruits into acts; "Cette force 'magique' de la parole est partagée par l'Art" 'This "magic" power of the word is shared by Art.' Charlot resorts to the special feelings he himself had about art, feelings nearer to primary religions than the conventional Western discourse about art.

Just because art is human communication, it has, from the beginning of history, expressed the special views of the times in which it was produced. For Catholics, the message of art is God. Just as philosophy has been called the handmaid of theology, so art will be the servant of faith, "Le serviteur de la Foi." In 1919, Charlot will start a large composition to express this view: *La Théologie Régulatrice des Arts* 'Theology, the Regulator of the Arts.' The artist is a worker, *l'ouvrier*, who uses art as a tool to communicate God. Although Charlot's definition of the artist as a worker could find support, for instance, in statements by Rodin published in *La Gilde*, it was still unusual, and was not used, as far as I can see, by Denis. In his 1917 talk, "La préparation artistique," Cadart will state, perhaps responding to Charlot: "L'artiste n'est pas un ouvrier. Il doit agir d'abord sur l'âme" 'The artist is not a worker. He must first and foremost act on the soul.'¹¹⁶ The word *ouvrier* emphasized too much the material for Cadart and perhaps also class.

Great decorative art is that which communicates rapidly and deeply a thought to the viewer. As a consequence, a first principle must be:

l'impression du sentiment dominant donnée à première vue par l'allure générale du tableau, couleur et forme, en dehors de tout détail...

'the impression of the dominant sentiment [is] communicated at first sight by the general look of the picture, color and form, outside of any detail...'

The primary emotion of the painting must strike at first sight by its design, color, and form, and all details and artistic devices must be subordinated to the intended impression. This view is central to the Classical tradition and was emphasized by Joshua Reynolds: "The Sublime impresses the mind at once with one great idea; it is a single blow..."; "What is done by Painting, must be done at one blow..."¹¹⁷ The contrary

view is held by hermetic traditions in which the content of the painting—like medieval symbol systems—or its expressive devices require decipherment. For instance, Gleizes and Metzinger formulate a Cubist view:

Le tableau ne se livrant que lentement semble toujours attendre qu'on l'interroge, comme s'il réservait une infinité de réponses à une infinité de questions. (1912: 34)

'The picture, surrendering itself only slowly, seems always to wait to be interrogated, as if it reserved an infinity of answers to an infinity of questions.'

Charlot saw a growing tendency of art to move in the hermetic direction, as he wrote in 1934:

It is even probable that art from the beginning of impressionism up to the death of the School of Paris will seem a logical curve, an unbroken development toward shorthand methods and the selfish use of a private code language, as opposed to the catholicity of the aims of art in most other periods. (AA I 17)

Charlot's emphasis on the immediate communication of the artwork's point is connected also, I would argue, to his own graphic sense and special interest in medieval and Japanese art. That emphasis—and the clarity of his own expressive compositions—remained basic to his view of art. Hermetic traditions draw attention to the artist rather than the message; they also appeal to the intellect rather than to the emotions. Charlot wanted first and foremost to communicate a message to a whole human being. After that has been accomplished, the means he used can be studied, and they are often more complicated than those used in hermetic traditions (M. C. Escher [1898–1972] being an example of the crudest possible art). In his later lectures and writings on art, Charlot would first articulate the general impression of an artwork and then reveal how the artist had created it: the architectural background emphasizing Jesus in Leonardo's *Last Supper* and the arches over Mary and the angel showing their conversational exchange in Fra Angelico's *Annunciation*. He particularly enjoyed devices that worked unconsciously on the viewer. He praised a Maya artist for creating the "optical illusion" of two arms where only one was drawn: "The spectator *sees* both arms with equal clearness and is scarcely aware of the stratagem" (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 316).

The second principle is that "Dans deux œuvres de valeur technique égale, l'art le plus noble est celui qui exprime la plus noble pensée" 'In two works of equal technical value, the more noble art is the one that expresses the more noble thought.' Charlot will elaborate on this point in later writings; the beauty of the idea expressed adds to the total beauty of the work. The young artist will be guided by "ces deux principes de diffusion et d'élévation" 'these two principles of diffusion and elevation.'

Just as in verbal communication, the artist must tread the line between prolixity and dryness; he must aim for "la simplicité, d'où jaillit la clarté" 'simplicity, from which surges clarity.' An example is typography with the gradual simplification of the letters from the earliest Gothic complications to the more legible Classical simplicity. Similarly, following in the line of Denis' thought, the artist must clarify and purify nature and elevate the particular model to the level of an ideal type. Photography and wax museums have demonstrated that the artist need no longer copy nature slavishly. On the other hand, the young artists' ideal type is not the Greek; the Greeks aimed for beauty, the new generation for simplicity,

from which beauty will arise by itself. Charlot is here differentiating his group from the Church artists who were depending uncreatively on the Classical tradition.

Charlot then addresses the relation of drawing and color, long debated in French art circles. He rejects here, as he will throughout his life, the idea that one should be accorded priority over the other. The two should be in an equilibrium of different functions:

Comme le livre emploie l'alphabet des lettres et des mots, la plastique use de formes et de couleurs, les formes étant surtout individuelles, la couleur les unissant dans une même ambiance.

'As a book employs the alphabet of letters and words, plastic art uses forms and colors, the forms being principally individual and the color uniting them in the same atmosphere.'

Charlot is here drawing on his own Impressionist and Post-Impressionist experiences, but the problem is more complicated even in his own work. Drawing—line and form—also provides unity of design—as they do clearly in Charlot's art from the beginning—and Charlot does not use atmosphere in his liturgical works of this period. In my opinion, this is the weakest part of Charlot's lecture and a subject on which his thinking and his practice were not in accord. In this lecture, Charlot also accuses Ingres of overemphasizing drawing and neglecting color, whereas he later considered him a masterful and creative colorist. Charlot's negative view in 1916, so unlike Denis', is significant as another indicator of his separation from the contemporary avant-garde: in that same year, Picasso was using Ingres' portrait drawings as a model for his own, an early stage in the development of his Classical period.

Charlot now descends from theoretical generalizations about clarifying nature to practice, where he expects resistance: "Simplifier la forme. Et d'abord rejeter du tableau tout ce qui ne concourt pas à l'effet, tout le bourrage qui équivaut aux 'chevilles' en poésie" 'Simplify the form. And first reject from the picture everything that does not contribute to the effect, all the padding that is the equivalent of "make-rhymes" in poetry.' This basing of visual practice in poetic reflects Charlot's interest in that field and also the fact that a successful Catholic poetry had been created while the visual arts were still struggling. Indeed, Claudel was as important a model for Charlot as Denis and ultimately a more lasting one:

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. (Interview December 7, 1970)

The artist must remain aware of the primary elements that will express his idea and subordinate clearly the secondary ones, as he feels the followers of Van Eyck and the Romantic painters failed to do. The essential motif must be studied through preparatory drawings, reduced to a minimum of details, and adapted to the particular surface to be decorated. Charlot is again thinking in terms of mural painting. The goal is to communicate the point of the painting at first sight, "l'effet obtenu du premier coup d'œil" 'the effect made

at first glance,’ and this is more important than trying to imitate nature. In consequence, if one has a long panel to decorate, the figures should be elongated to fit it even if their proportions are thereby distorted. A historical justification for this can be found in medieval art. Indeed, the main reason for such distortions is not physical but to express an idea: for instance, to portray the Virgin Mary as drawn heavenward by her very thoughts of God. Romanesque angels were portrayed as unnaturally slender to express their spiritual natures: “des silhouettes d’une douceur émaciée vraiment divine” ‘silhouettes of a truly divine, emaciated softness.’ Human beings in contrast were depicted in their natural proportions:

Oh ! Qu’ils sont laids avec leur ventre rond et leurs petits membres grotesques. Oh !
qu’ils sont laids et naturels !
On saisit à plein la pensée du mystique qui tailla cela...

‘Oh how ugly they are with their round belly and little grotesque limbs. Oh how ugly
and natural!

One can barely understand the thought of the mystic who carved that...’

Artistic distortion is the result of mystical vision, which sees beyond physical appearances. Indeed, to make his point, the artist can exaggerate the contrast between those slender angels and “le massif, le terrestre” ‘the massive, the earthy’ of the human beings. The Greeks preserved the proportions because human beings were their highest beauty. For Christians, that highest point is God.¹¹⁸

Charlot is describing his own style of his liturgical period, but his later work would make a complete turn toward “le massif, le terrestre,” a turn inspired by new experiences and a new spirituality:

Much of my work, as we could say, has stocky proportions that are a little similar to those that you find in Mexican pre-Hispanic manuscripts, for example, on stone idols, and so on, quite short in relation to the Greek classical standard proportions for the human body. But Marcel Lenoir had very elongated proportions. These things are the classical flair, that is, they were obviously descended from the Greek and Roman tradition, the classical tradition, but very elongated; something that you could find also, I think, in some of the works of the group of the Nabis. There was, for them, there was a spirituality in elongation, and in that *Way of the Cross*, I am working within that world of thought that, we could say, thin people are more spiritual than fat people. Since then, and I think before that and after that also, I have had other ideas about spirituality, and I went back very quickly to the stocky bodies I had learned of in looking at Mexican antiquities. (Interview November 6, 1970)

Charlot continued to see this stylistic dichotomy throughout his life, for instance in the difference between Aztec and Mayan art: “The extreme elongation of the Chichen figures is absolutely incompatible with the Mexican’s love for short, squat representations. These are two very different concepts of beauty” (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 343). Charlot would acquire a positive dislike for stylistic elongations, for instance, in the work of Roberto Montenegro and Adolfo Best-Maugard:

The thing that bothered me, or would have bothered me about them if I had looked at their thing very much, was that there was a sort of elegance, what for me seemed like a false elegance: elongations and sophistication. I don't know exactly where they got that from, but I think it was in the case of Montenegro the tail end of Aubrey Beardsley. That didn't leave me indifferent. It repulsed me horribly, so that I couldn't look at their things very much. (Interview May 18, 1971)

Nonetheless, this early image of the spiritual versus the physical stayed with Charlot in curious ways:

This uneasiness that I suffer in inhabiting this body of the Church militant 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)

Similarly, when speaking of his poetry, Charlot stated:

Nowadays I am horribly worried by certain ways of thinking that come out in the words in those poems. I always tie spirituality with, for example, whiteness. I speak of the white fingers of our Lord and the white this and the white that, and it reminds me of something that I found in Bloy, I think, when he was very annoyed at somebody who said that "he was entranced by the whiteness of the Host." And there must have been in me something that disappeared somewhere on the way in living, because nowadays I really think that black, probably, and certainly brown have more of a tie with spirituality than white. However, I have to be humble. Those poems and that *Way of the Cross* were all done in good faith, and I have to accept what I was at the time, even though I have modified my color sense since. (Interview November 6, 1970)

Charlot at the time was using a conventional Christian color sense, as seen, for instance, in Denis: "Les peintres ne disent de Dieu que la beauté, la blancheur, la logique harmonieuse" 'The painters say of God only the beauty, the whiteness, the harmonious logic' (1912: 31).

Charlot also changed his views on the use of nature, although his statement quoted below is reacting to my exaggerated summary of this section of "Nous les Jeunes !":

JPC: In your talk "Nous, les Jeunes !", you have a very interesting paragraph in which you discuss realism and religion, and you say Christians don't have to be complete realists because for them matter isn't everything; therefore we can distort, we can sort of play with nature, if you want, with natural forms in an unrealistic way

because we believe there is something higher that, if you want, judges nature. You'd obviously thought a lot about the relationship of religion and art at this time.

JC: ...I would say now that I don't agree with that business of being free with nature. I think that nature gives us a model that is established; the very fact that it is there would ask of us a tremendous respect because what nature is there, just by its being, depends on all those many mysterious laws of growth and family resemblances, I was saying, that makes it dangerous for us to tamper with nature. Now that doesn't mean that our route has to be realistic in the sense that people use realism, but it means that we cannot use nature. Again we can come back to Delacroix, this time as a sort of a correction of Delacroix. He was worried also about that relation of nature and art, and he said somewhere that nature is just like the alphabet to the writer. That—I don't agree at all with that. I think that nature is a model and that in our art we don't have to copy nature because we could copy only the surface of nature. We have to act again certain laws which are similar to the laws with which nature creates. I shouldn't speak of things I don't read in the text, but I think Aristotle said something of that type somewhere. So nowadays, anyhow, I've changed my point of view, and I have a much greater respect for nature than appears in that talk of mine.¹¹⁹

Having discussed form, Charlot now turns in his lecture to the more difficult subject of color. He wants to base his view on the broadest, most enduring tradition, "ce qui est toujours une certitude de bons sens" 'what is always a certitude of good sense.' First, he rejects an exact imitation of nature, which would lead to "l'inorganisé, le diffus de l'ensemble" 'the unorganized, the diffuse of the ensemble.' The primary and secondary elements of the picture would not be distinguished, and the details would not be subordinated to the whole: "on multiplie les morceaux intéressants en détruisant l'ensemble" 'one multiplies the interesting bits and destroys the ensemble,' as do the followers of Van Eyck. On the other hand, one should not go to the opposite extreme of subordinating color entirely to line, as Ingres did. The artist should follow the middle way: "Partir de la couleur vraie du modèle, mais simplifier en rapprochant d'une teinte plate" 'Start from the true color of the model, but simplify by making it nearer to a flat tint.' This describes well Charlot's own practice in his liturgical art and shows that he himself did not consider that he was deemphasizing color or overly subordinating color to line. Although color should be simplified, it should be used to emphasize the intended effect, for instance, by concentrating the lightest ones. Charlot then draws on his Impressionist experiences: the artist should use the decomposition of light and complementaries as shown by the modern landscape painters, especially Monet. Charlot repeats the dictum that there is no black in nature. As far as I can see, his own surviving liturgical work does not follow this recommendation. Charlot closes this section by saying that any revival of traditional Christian color symbolism would require a reeducation of the public; this is perhaps a comment on some of the discussions being held in the Gilde and in Catholic art circles generally.¹²⁰

Charlot summarizes his view: "Maximum de pensée avec un minimum de moyens" 'A maximum of thought with a minimum of means.' That thought should not however be transcribed literally, as done in bad art, but by parallelism and induction like poetry. Charlot is alluding here, at least

in part, to Denis' teachings on correspondences or equivalents (1918: 524): the artist "doit pratiquer la métaphore comme un poète" 'must use metaphor like a poet.' Charlot would later base his statements about that view on the "preforms" of Ozenfant, but he would have first encountered it in the writings of Denis. The poetry of the artwork resided also in the original, significant image created, "symbolic ideas" (Morse 1976: 4), a view that led to Charlot's creation of continuing themes and subjects throughout his career.

Nor need the Catholic artist always paint virgins, angels, and saints: "Tout sujet exécuté religieusement reflète un esprit religieux" 'Every subject done religiously reflects a religious spirit.' Charlot is alluding here to the traditional hierarchy that placed religious subjects at the summit. His view as stated in this article alternated throughout his life with others professing an adherence to that hierarchy. In fact, he remembered in our interviews that he adhered to the idea of a hierarchy during his liturgical period and apparently misremembered his position in "Nous les Jeunes !":

Well, I did when I was very young, when I was in my teens and we had that Gilde Notre Dame. I remember writing an article where I put religious art at the top over historical painting. I am not sure now, because it isn't the theme itself but the clarification of the theme that is the point that the craftsman, that the artist must put over; and he is a "mouthpiece," if you want, for the theme. It's not the theme itself, but the way that the theme is put together that counts, and so it's possible that religious themes proper are not visual themes in the same way that historical themes are visual themes. That is, to bring the unseen into the realm of the seen is sort of a weakening, if you want, of the theme itself. It's possible that the religious experience is not specially visual, that it is something else, that it is something that is not part of the law of the visual arts. But of course, the painter still has a beautiful role to play in religious art by channeling people through the seen—that is, through his paintings or sculptures or whatever he does for the churches—towards something else. But that something else is not within the realm of the arts, and the fellow who understands religious art by looking at it and is tempted to go further will have to go further alone. (Interview October 1, 1970)

In his thinking, this is one of several examples of his preferring to retain an opposition rather than to attempt a synthesis; he apparently found it fruitful to look at certain problems first from one perspective and then from another.

Charlot now discusses the way the school of young Catholic artists is regarded by others. They should not be confused with the Beuron artists and others who "pastichait les Primitifs, ce qui est aussi absurde que de pasticher la Renaissance" 'who made pastiches of the Primitives, which is just as absurd as making pastiches of the Renaissance.' No modern liturgical art can be based on styles that have died; they have died for a reason. Huysmans ridiculed such artists by saying they thought they were being mystical by drawing women too long. By using Huysmans against his own recommendations, Charlot shows clearly that he does not want them to become a formula. The new liturgical art must be the

sincere, personal, creative expression of the trained Christian artist: “Issue du plus profond de nous-mêmes, du sentiment religieux solidement appuyé par la logique, soutenu par la tradition...” ‘Emerging from the deepest part of ourselves, from religious emotion solidly supported by logic, affirmed by tradition...’ Views of art will naturally differ, and the young artists want only to be respected as they respect others. But they are usually treated with irritating pity and stereotyped as followers of Maurice Denis. Denis, Desvallières, and Marcel-Lenoir are certainly precursors of the new school, but the young artists do not adore them.

Charlot returns to his outline: “Quel est le fruit que j’espère de cette conférence ?” ‘What is the fruit that I hope from this conference?’ The young artists should be respected in their own right and not enlisted for someone else’s purposes. Charlot seems to be referring here to the goals and pressures of the missionary group in the Gilde and of the members of the Société Saint-Jean. The young artists need technical conferences and solid interpretations of the art of the West and other cultures, especially Asian, rather than more theories of beauty. They need especially lectures on media:

peinture à l’œuf, à la fresque, technique des vieux miniaturistes, gravure, eau-forte ; la gravure sur bois, méthodes, outils, matières travaillées par les anciens sculpteurs, la statuaire peinte et ses moyens, la faïence, l’art du vitrail, la mosaïque...
chaque branche spéciale, traitée à fond : moyens actuels, historique de leur évolution, examen critique des œuvres du genre (avec reproductions si possible)...

‘tempera, fresco, technique of the old miniaturists, engraving, watercolor; woodblock, methods, tools, materials worked by ancient sculptors, painted statuary and its methods, stoneware, the art of stained-glass windows, mosaic...

each special branch thoroughly discussed: today’s means, the history of their development, critical examination of works in the medium (with reproductions, if possible)...

Such conferences would not be of interest only to the painters and sculptors of the Gilde, as seen in the excellent lectures of musicians and poets. Similarly, the Gilde dues should be spent on technical and historical books on art rather than on more devotional volumes.

Charlot is not seeking a school of art whose members share a style:

ce que nous demandons, ce n’est pas l’unité d’art, mais l’unité d’amitié, car si la première est impossible, la seconde est fort désirable, presque essentielle.

‘what we ask for is not the unity of art, but the unity of friendship, for if the former is impossible, the latter is most desirable, almost essential.’

In all the great exhibitions, the Gilde should demonstrate that it is large enough to encompass “toutes les écoles, fraternellement unies, comme la Rome antique accueillait tous les dieux” ‘all the schools, united in fraternity, just as ancient Rome welcomed all the gods.’ Positive group spirit along with individual creative freedom was the ideal situation for Charlot.

A later article by Pierre du Colombier (January 10, 1921) confirms a number of Charlot's points and shows that the situation had not changed—indeed it is very much the same for liturgical artists today. Colombier states that few people are devoting themselves to liturgical art, and they are “justifiés et par l'incompréhension du public catholique et par la pauvreté de l'Église” ‘justified both by the incomprehension of the Catholic public and by the poverty of the Church’ (97). The ecclesiastical authorities are particularly to blame because they are responsible for the education of the public and need to improve their own taste, which leans too much to revivals of older styles.¹²¹ (Denis preferred to blame the whole society more than the clergy [1912: 148 f.].) The liturgical artists are admirable: “à leurs talents artistiques ils ajoutent la vertu morale du désintéressement” ‘to their artistic talents they add the moral virtue of disinterestedness’ (98). Though few in numbers, “Leur enthousiasme au moins tente d'y remédier. Ce qui les caractérise de plus en plus, c'est leur appétit de travail collectif” ‘Their enthusiasm at least tries to make up for their numbers. What characterizes them more and more, is their appetite for collective work.’ Their collective work is inspired not only by the artists of the Middle Ages, but by group projects of secular artists around 1921.

Charlot's second lecture, “La Probité Artistique,”¹²² dated March–April 1917, is shorter but equally formal and logically organized. The expression *probité artistique* ‘artistic probity’ is used often in debate but seldom defined. In fact, different types of artists use the word in different ways: “Jetons un coup d'œil sur l'art, tel qu'il est compris aujourd'hui et tâchons d'en retirer une règle de probité” ‘Let us take a look at art as it is understood today and try to induce from it a rule of probity.’ The first type is ‘the artist with a capital A’: the ivory-tower genius, realizing his ideal and disdaining the public. He seems to have great probity, for his motive is the love of art: “l'amour de ce plaisir de création que ressent celui qui fait passer une part de lui-même dans ses œuvres” ‘the love of this pleasure in creation felt by the person who injects a part of himself into his works.’ Charlot is certainly speaking from his personal experience; he is characteristically feeling the attraction of the position he rejects. Such pleasure in creation, however, is personal, therefore egoistic, because it is separating the artist from society. He is not using his work to repay society for the support it is offering him. In fact, if he had to survive in isolation, he would have no time to do his art. The ivory-tower artist is, therefore, not an example of probity but of closing one's eyes to “une réalité logique” ‘a logical reality.’ This is a strong, clear statement of Charlot's view that the artist must accept himself as a member of society with responsibilities.

The second type of artist is only too directed towards the public. Some are jobbers, “hommes de métier,” who see the public as the buyer they want to please; they are not properly artists. Others, however, have real talent, but have gone commercial; they are egoists for money rather than for art. They dare not depart from their signature style for fear of losing their reputation and their clients: “Jusqu'à la mort, il s'imitera lui-même, refroidissant dans des répliques innombrables ce qu'un jour de verve lui avait fait découvrir” ‘Until he dies, he will imitate himself, chilling in innumerable replicas that which a day of verve enabled him to discover.’¹²³ The public is happy to have “un art abordable sans fatigue” ‘an art accessible without fatigue’ and to have an artist who wants to please: “Voici donc l'artiste en règle avec la société” ‘Here is then an artist who is right with society.’ But *God* is displeased to see the talent misused that He gave to the artist for the service of others: “Au lieu d'élever la foule à sa hauteur, il s'est rabaissé

au niveau médiocre” ‘Instead of raising the crowd to his height, he has lowered himself to a mediocre level.’ The artist communicates banalities or bad messages instead of “des Vérités que lui eut soufflé l’Esprit, car, celles-ci se vendent moins cher” ‘Truths breathed into him by the Spirit, because those sell for less.’ Like the bad servant in the parable of the talents, “Il a volé le Maître, profitant d’un don dont il refusait en même temps les responsabilités ; ce manque de probité ne restera pas impuni” ‘He has robbed the Master, profiting from a gift while refusing its responsibilities; this lack of probity will not go unpunished.’

Having recognized these improper extremes, what are “les conditions d’existence d’un art viable, rentré dans l’Ordre, en règle avec l’artiste, avec la société, avec Dieu” ‘the conditions of existence of a viable art, returned to Order, right with the artist, with society, with God’? *Ordre* is being used here as the all-encompassing design created by God. True, the artist, just like the preacher, must be able to support himself by his work, but that is secondary to his God-given mission: “l’artiste chrétien prêche plastiquement comme l’orateur verbalement” ‘the Christian artist preaches plastically as the orator does verbally.’ In doing so, he also feels “la joie créatrice” ‘creative joy,’ but that experience also is secondary to his mission. For the Christian artist, the public is neither a mob to disdain nor a client–judge to satisfy, but a community to be reeducated, bettered, and, if necessary, brought back to the Church. For this, a true art of faith is needed, not the jobbers’ imitations commissioned by ecclesiastics:

L’artiste probe, sachant que sa valeur artistique est liée à sa conception religieuse, travaillera son catholicisme : pour prêcher il faut savoir, pour convertir, croire, pour soulever, aimer !

‘The artist of probity, knowing that his artistic value is connected to his religious conception, will work with his Catholicism: to preach, one must know; to convert, believe; to raise up, love!’

The quarrels of the different schools of art are very small next to this great purpose. Let us agree on the essence and soul of our art, forget conventions, and become like little children: “Alors, nous nous retrouverons solides sur notre sol de France” ‘Then we will find ourselves again, solid, on our soil of France.’ Charlot gives full expression to his love of the tradition of French art, the one chauvinism he never lost although he would temper, qualify, and even modify it later in life:

L’art, pas plus que la science, pas plus que la littérature, n’est international. Plus que jamais, il sied de nous relia à la vraie tradition française. Par dessus l’italianisme, par dessus la pastillisme et autres, nous renouerons solidement la chaîne.

Il nous faut un art catholique et français. Nous l’aurons.

‘Art, no more than science, no more than literature, is international. More than ever, it is proper to reconnect ourselves to the true French tradition. Beyond Italianism, beyond pastiches and so on, we reconnect the chain solidly.

We need a Catholic and French art. We will have it.’

This view is the source of Charlot's efforts—as he moved in his life through one culture after another—to appreciate the special character of each through its living, literature, and art, and to create a new art capable of expressing it.

The public will react with confusion at first to this new art. Catholics will resist the new direction with inertia, and unbelievers will combat it as they do our Faith. But our very difficulties will demonstrate our probity:

et puis tout pour le but, pour que l'art plastique à son tour, avec autant de ferveur que sa sœur, la littérature, quoique tardif, s'humilie, confiant, docile, serviable, aux pieds de l'Eglise souveraine !

'and so everything for the goal, so that plastic art in its turn, with as much fervor as its sister, literature, however late, humbles itself—confident, docile, serviceable—at the feet of the sovereign Church!'

The visual arts should follow the achieved example of Catholic literature and with the same confessional ardor. This peroration will mark the lifetime extreme of Charlot's connection of art specifically to the institutional Church.

Both talks are remarkable for their aggressive tone. In fact, that tone was characteristic of Charlot's French writing into the 1920s and could be used in his private communications, as seen in the draft of a letter from mid-1917 to Henri Cheneau:

Cher Monsieur Cheneau

Je viens de recevoir un échantillon de votre "correspondance militaire" dont vous me parliez si souvent quand j'étais civil.

J'ai trouvé votre lettre méchante.

Je suis trop las pour faire de l'ironie. Permettez-moi d'y répondre simplement :

Vous m'accusez

1) de ne pas avertir quand je disparaissais

2) de ne pas répondre aux lettres reçues.

Or je suis parti le Lundi matin : Le Dimanche j'ai porté un bouquet

'Dear Mr. Cheneau,

I have just received a sample of your "military correspondence" of which you spoke so often to me when I was a civilian.

I found your letter mean.

I'm too tired to indulge in irony. Allow me to answer your letter simply:

You accuse me

1) of not having informed you when I disappeared

2) of not having replied to the letters received.

In fact, I left Monday morning: Sunday I brought a bouquet...'

This draft may not have been completed and sent; the addressee appears in fact on a list dated January 29, 1918, of people with whom Charlot was in contact. However, in Mexico and the United States to the end of the 1930s, Charlot would be known for his biting wit, which could harden into sarcasm. Anita Brenner wrote in 1926: “He is exceedingly malicious toward the things and people he dislikes, and these are many; and he is loyal and self-sacrificing to the extreme, for the things and people which he does like” (1926: 3).

5.4.

RELIGION

Charlot’s view of art is clearly inseparable from his religion, which was continuing the main trends described earlier. In a number of poems—like *Cabré sous le coup de fouet de la haine sœur* and *Pas d’orgueil. Rumeurs*—he addresses his main temptation, pride. In *J’ai lié l’Orgueil au pilori* of September 1914, he develops the odd image of torturing pride in words reminiscent of Christ’s flagellation. Death joins him in doing this, an expression of Charlot’s continual use of the thought of death to combat his temptations. In this poem and others, the reader senses the sadomasochistic atmosphere of much Catholic devotionism, in which the tortures inflicted on Christ and the saints were regular subjects of reading and meditation. Indeed, the conventional image of the worshipper being beaten into submission by God is used regularly by Charlot, for instance in *oh ! Seigneur j’ai connu que votre joug est doux* of April 1915: the devotee is a beast of burden who must be beaten on its flanks.

Charlot was especially worried about his intellectual pride. In *Des mots ! Des mots, Des mots ? Il n’en faut plus Seigneur* of October 1915, he writes: “‘Qu’as-tu fait’ et non ‘Qu’as-tu lu’ dit le Seigneur” “‘What have you done’ and not ‘What have you read,’ says the Lord.’ At the Last Judgment, he tells himself, ‘Tu comprendras le néant morne de ces pages...’ ‘You will understand the mournful nothingness of these pages...’ In a poem based on the Catholic rhetoric of the time—*Le 19ème siècle a drapé dans l’hermine*, written between November 1915 and February 1916—his own pride reminds him of that of the nineteenth-century intellectuals who followed their thinking out of Christianity and ended by finding nothing:

Leur nez gris reparut à fleur de terre, un soir
 “Nous sommes descendus jusqu’où l’on peut descendre”
 Dirent-ils “Et qu’avez-vous vu là-bas ?” “Du noir...”
 ‘One evening, their gray nose reappeared brushing the earth,
 “We have descended as low as one can”
 They said, “And what did you see there?” “Blackness...”’

The temptation of pride is connected to that of sexuality in *oh ! Maître, laissez-moi vous dire sans mots vains* of May 1915, in which Charlot describes his powerful attraction to women in the same words he will use later in a prose meditation, quoted earlier. Similarly, in *Mon cœur sec voudrait se rafraîchir en vous, Maître* of August 1915, his heart dares not confess “la fureur de ses désirs de boue” ‘the fury of his muddy desires,’ and all of his failings are joined:

L’ inanité de nos espoirs et de nos trances
 Rués vers l’incertaine et fragmentaire récompense

Nos tristesses nos joies, le tourbillon sans fin
Roule : Lucre l'amour gloire, Hors de Vous tout est vain.

'The inanity of our hopes and our trances
hurled towards an uncertain and fragmentary recompense,
Our sorrows, our joys, the endless whirlwind
Rolls: lucre, love, glory. Apart from You, all is vain.'

Charlot again uses the thought of death to counter temptation. In *Quand mon corps pourrira, roide et vert, que mon nom* of June 1915, death and the rotting corpse reveal the shallowness of the pleasures of life. In *Candeur* of February 1916, the same mental images are used specifically against sexual temptation. In *Madrigal I* and *II* of February 1916, death is used in the same way, but Charlot adds the thought that the game playing of sexuality inhibits true human communications and relationships; these same themes can be found in *Maintenant que j'ai dépiauté tes semblants* of the same date. Charlot expressed his need to see women fully as persons rather than as mere sex objects in his poem *Madeleine, prostituée aux mains ravies* of 1915, a poem for which several earlier versions survive. Mary Magdalene is a prostitute exploited by many men, but she turns to Jesus and is saved; in the religious thinking of the time, Charlot wants to think of women as souls to be saved rather than bodies to be used.

Charlot continued reading mystical writings; his interest in mysticism was shared in the Gilde. A lecturer discussed Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross (V., April 25, 1918). Cadart lectured on "Le programme de demain : Réalisme et Mysticisme" 'Tomorrow's Program: Realism and Mysticism' (November 25, 1917: 4): the young people of today are going beyond positivism, scientism, pragmatism, modernism and fideism to reach a "réalisme intégral" 'integral realism,' which encompasses the spiritual as well as the material:

Dans le visible tout compénétré d'âme, de pensée, de sentiment, de vouloir,—c'est-à-dire d'invisible—ils ont rencontré Dieu ; et du, [*sic*] même coup, ils sont devenus mystiques. Etre mystiques c'est avoir le sens du divin...

'In the visible entirely penetrated by soul, thought, sentiment, will—that is, the invisible—they found God; and at the same time, they became mystical. To be mystical is to have a sense of the divine...'

But they remained realists in their mysticism, resisting mystical laziness, sensuality, and pride, and seeking "de l'ordre et de la discipline" 'order and discipline.' Their interior life gives value to their work:

"*Réalisme et Mysticisme*",—au point de vue artistique—c'est le programme de La Gilde Notre-Dame. L'artiste d'aujourd'hui n'est pas un isolé.

"Realism and Mysticism"—from the artistic point of view—is the program of the Gilde Notre-Dame. The artist of today is not an isolate.'

The artist should be in touch with the whole cultural life of the nation and recognize a common ideal across different fields. Cadart quotes Elizabeth Leseur: "Toute âme qui s'élève, élève le monde" 'Every soul that

raises itself, raises the world.’ Cadart’s lecture supports Charlot’s description of the Gilde ideals: an art that expresses sincere religious emotion, an open, interdisciplinary teamwork, and the giving of good example.

Experience was essential for Charlot in religion just as emotion was in art; religious experience distinguishes the Christian of the soul from the nominal one (“Nous les Jeunes !”):

une certitude par la vérité d’expérience, l’expérience pratique de tous les jours qu’on ne peut vérifier que par l’épreuve, certitude toute personnelle, incommunicable, mais qui n’en est pas moins absolue.

‘a certitude from the truth of experience, the practical everyday experience that can be verified only by testing, completely personal certitude, incommunicable, but which is nonetheless absolute.’

Besides his study of individual mystics, he himself was now experiencing directly an intensified liturgical life, the life of the sacraments and the Christian community:

Well, we were all Catholics, of course, but we had intentions of reforming maybe not the Church, I don’t think we were thinking in terms of anything pragmatic or that high up, but in cleaning up the devotional attitudes of the people. And nowadays it sounds a little on the wrong track, but our idea was, for example, to be able to read our missal in Latin, which we considered quite superior to the vernacular, so that we would be able to follow the Mass—of course, the old-fashioned Mass with the priest turning his back to the people—as it proceeded at the altar, and meditating at the same time that we followed the Mass and in complete silence. The idea of singing at Mass, especially singing things that would not be the liturgical texts that were being used by the priests, seemed to us an absolutely sinful thing against all the rules of good devotion. I must say that in those days of course the singing at Mass, especially in the rich parishes and so on, sounded very much like opera, and people turned, I remember them turning from the altar to watch the balcony where the singer was singing to see better the singer. There was something certainly mundane about the whole thing, but even though those things happened when I was in my teens, I’ve had a very hard time adjusting to the trends that happened when I was in my seventies that were exactly against the trends that we had worked so hard for. So it gave me a sort of philosophy, I would say, that the important thing is not what you fight for, but maybe the effort, the sincerity, the goodwill, and a sort of heroism with which you fight for what you think is a good fight. Now in our fight as the Gilde Notre Dame, thinking of it later on, over fifty years later on, I see that we were absolutely defeated and that the ideals of our day have been, we should say perhaps, superseded so thoroughly that it seems now that the effort was in vain, but I don’t think that it was. I remember forcing myself to do things that were on the brink, on the verge of that heroism. For example, I was going to the Beaux-Arts, and I was working at the Beaux-Arts as a student, and then I would stay outside the exit door and distribute my little religious tracts to the

students, who were most astonished when they read the contents. One of them said, “I thought it was an ad for something against syphilis,” which was what would happen more probably at the door of the Beaux-Arts School. It was hard for me. I never was a fellow who liked really action, especially public action in terms of religion. So I braced myself to do things I wouldn’t have done otherwise. And I still think that there is something in that idea of silence as being linked to prayer. At least I have never been able to shake it off, and nowadays as I go to the Sunday Mass and go through a continuous gymnastic in the reform devotions, going up and down and trying to sing and trying to read the missal in a loud voice and so on, it goes against the grain of my own training, which was naturally silence and a sort of meditation. But the one very positive thing that remains—the fruit of that Gilde Notre Dame: that we were all young people in their teens and we were all working with a great enthusiasm for what we thought was the best for the Church in the world. A number of us disappeared in nunneries; I remember some of the girls who became nuns. Others had, I think, a good balance between staying in the world, having their own vocations, and remaining rather intense in a sort of personalized devotion that we had learned with the Gilde. (Interview October 7, 1970)

The Catholic liturgy was in fact one of the principal attractions of the Catholic Renaissance for artists and writers (e.g., Huysmans *Oblat* 7 f., 31). This intensified participation in the Christian liturgy and community provided a counterweight to Charlot’s earlier emphasis on mysticism in his thinking about religion. Liturgy was attractive as a physical expression and communication of the spiritual, and Charlot had, since his earliest childhood, felt a strong solidarity with the people (John Charlot 1990: 42–46). However, Charlot never became engaged in the details and historical minutiae of the liturgy as seen, for instance, in Huysmans’ antiquarianism. His concentration on the central mysteries of the sacraments accords with his emphasis on the overall effect of an artwork rather than on its details.

Throughout his liturgical period, Charlot’s Catholicism had two tracks that enriched each other: a mystical, esoteric, and a physical, parish. He would have to go through the war, the sexual temptations of the Occupation, and a last temptation in Mexico to leave the world and become a monk, before he arrived at his final synthesis, what he called the religion of a parishioner (Interview October 10, 1970). I myself would call it the religion of an artist–parishioner because he felt to an extraordinary degree—in the art, liturgy, and sacraments of Catholic life—the physical communication of knowledge and grace.

The moral dilemma of having to assert oneself as an artist and yet not commit the sin of pride could also be solved within the context of liturgical art. Pride was countered by realizing that one’s talent was God-given for the good of others. The artist was not the ivory-tower genius, but God’s servant charged with a special mission for the community. The definition of the artist as worker and artisan supported this humble view. On the other hand, one was a true artist, with an authentic vision of reality, which had its own exigencies that demanded respect. He could defend himself against those who sought to misuse or destroy his art; he fought, however, not for himself, but in order to perform faithfully his

duty. Maritain argued from Thomism that “L’œuvre chrétienne veut l’artiste libre, en tant qu’artiste” ‘Christian artwork demands the artist who is free inasmuch as he is an artist’ (Régamey 1948: 53).

Charlot recognized the same problem in the liturgical art of other cultures, for instance, the Maya:

Two of the contributing facts to the definition of the style may be the momentary uneasiness with which the artist met the unusual size of the shafts and also his restraint, due to a too close collaboration with the priests. (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931: 321)

This sustained collective impersonal style points also to sacerdotal or aristocratic pressure on the artisan, and, in turn, to a rigidly organized social régime. (342)

The artist was more interested in character and regalia. He evidently enjoyed his work and was tumultuous [*sic*], ingenious and shrewdly observant. Apparently he suffered no pressure from the priests, nor was he overwhelmed by uneasiness or awe of his task. (342)

Curiously, Diego Rivera faced the same problem when Communist Party officials tried to direct his work. His answer was to ask them, who was the Communist artist here?

Since creativity had its source within a person, Charlot, like Denis and others, concluded that character, morality, purpose, and so on, were not detached from art-making. To do good art, both in quality and content, one had to be a good person; otherwise one would be hypocritical. Although Charlot never stated it, I think he feared that if he became a bad person, he would not be able to continue his art. Several times during his life, he experienced a creative block due to outside pressures and responsibilities and feared putting himself into situations where this might happen; this was one of the reasons he delayed marrying until late in life. Charlot could have had similar fears about moral difficulties, especially since his view of art was essentially religious. Art was his religious mission and thus could not be produced in separation from his religious life.

Finally, Charlot’s concentration on essentials and his “personalized devotion” explain why he did not become involved in the intense church politics and controversies of the time. Unlike Bloy and Maritain, he directed his personal polemic only against bad art, although he adopted the standard Catholic rhetoric against certain nineteenth-century trends. In his own thinking, he cannot be labeled as a member of any church party; rather, he was eclectic, adopting ideas and terms from the different intellectual streams of his time, but adapting them to his own tendencies. Like right-wing Catholics, he reacted against individualism with a certain integralism, but appreciated different views, like those of his father, different religions, like Judaism, and different cultures, like Japanese and Aztec. Similarly, he was chauvinistic about the French classical tradition, not out of xenophobia, but because he felt it was a basis on which he could appreciate and understand the great artists of other cultures. Charlot saw conversion as a proper goal for his apostolate, but was anticlerical and deeply distrustful of the church’s preachy and rightist influence on society. He had a deep concern for the poor and the workers, but did not want them

to become bourgeois; not because he believed in a rightist social hierarchy, but because he shared Bloy's criticisms of the middle class and appreciated peasant and worker cultures. He also shared Bloy's visceral dislike of the rich and powerful as well as the bourgeois gentrification of an originally radical Christianity. Those who have sought the life of comfort outside the walls of the symbolic city in his poem, *De la grâce en allégorie d'une Cité close*, discussed below, are not Protestants or Jews, but lapsed and bourgeois Catholics.¹²⁴ In his concern for the workers and the poor, Charlot was near to the Social Catholics of the time, who based their views on the progressive encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII. On the other hand, although he always voted left, Charlot did not subscribe to any detailed reforming program of either the right or the left, in which he could always see disadvantages as well as advantages, bad principles or faulty applications of good ones. In this, he shared his father's anarchism and displayed the clarity and cynicism of a French intellectual, qualities that would be nourished by the experience of the war: he would feel that both the bourgeois and the Bolsheviks had profited from the war at the expense of the soldiers who fought it. Paradoxically for one so communitarian in his writings, Charlot was more the individualist than the joiner and hated to be labeled. He tried in his life and his work to be human, with all that that implied.

In a sarcastic summary of his religious life, written in May 1927, Charlot drew a dividing line at his entry into the army and characterized his earlier state:

Jusqu'il y a 10 ans catholique enfant, de haute valeur, âme chérubine (je dis d'enfant) aux joues standard surnourries du sacrement, d'ignorance et de paix canard intransis du drame familial. Le corps, d'être inactif cru dompté. J'étais certainement en état de grâce. Un peu d'hystérisme ~~quand plus jeune~~ : trappe des communions crues mauvaises, des confessions à refaire ; scrupules gourmets. des mortifications taille fillette; mais un cerveau : Hildegard médité en métro et ces ~~méditations rendant grâce~~ prières, les doigts aux yeux, lunettes au front. De l'orgueil : je dormais aux sermons.

'Up to ten years old, a Catholic child, of high value, cherubic soul (I say of a child) with standard cheeks overfed with the sacrament, ignorance and fake peace unparalyzed by the family drama. The body, because inactive, believed to be under control. I was certainly in a state of grace. A little hystericism ~~when younger~~: pitfalls of communions thought bad, of confessions to be redone; gourmet scruples. girlish mortifications, but a brain: meditations on Hildegard while in the metro and these ~~meditations giving thanks~~ prayers, fingers covering the eyes, glasses on the forehead. Pride: I slept during the sermons.'

Charlot recognized his tendency to religious scruples and identified pride as his greatest fault. He conceded his intelligence, positive interest in mysticism, and life of prayer. He deemphasized sexual temptation, stating, as he did elsewhere, that he had been preserved by his ignorance. However, contemporary documents reveal, as seen above, that sexuality was an important problem even before he entered the army.

Charlot's view can be explained only by the fact that army life was the occasion of sexual temptations so much more intense that they completely eclipsed those that he had experienced before.

5.5.

POETRY

Poetry continued to be important for Charlot, informing important points in his thinking about art—such as the need for the indirect expression of a message. The Gilde emphasized poetry as well with publications and readings. Charlot was less productive in poetry during this period because he was concentrating on his visual art, but he did continue using poems as a means of expressing and exploring his inner thoughts and feelings. The poems he did produce followed the tendencies in his liturgical work. Firstly, the poems around his father's death and his own temptations have a stronger and steadier religious emphasis. Secondly, he developed a new poetry that was less a personal than a religious expression; it is directed towards the communication of a message, just like his liturgical art. Moreover, his style was based increasingly on Catholic models: on medieval and folk poetry and, selectively, on the poetry of the contemporary Catholic Renaissance.

La Grâce, dated September 1916, develops the Symbolist image of a boat in full sail, the mariner proud of his ascendancy until the fall of the wind reveals his dependence. Charlot is again treating the problem of illusionary pride and actual dependence on God's grace. *Et je suis attelé au joug* of the same date is notable for its striking language. The speaker, tied together with others, is turning with great effort a large millstone while "les riches et les libres et les sages" 'the rich, the free, and the wise' laugh at the effort they cannot understand. The work, however, has a point: the refrain "Le grain se moult, il tombe" 'The grain is milled, it falls' becomes "Le grain tombe il germe" 'The grain falls, it sprouts.' Charlot uses the idea of germination in "Nous les Jeunes !" for the "magic" effect of verbal and visual communication; I believe he is depicting in this poem the great efforts of the Gildeurs, which were being patronized, misunderstood, and left unsupported.

De la grâce en allégorie d'une Cité close que ses habitants désertent pour y retourner tôt après, dated September–October 1916, is a long, formal poem, featuring a large vocabulary with technical terms, that develops the traditional Christian image of a city; the image was used in the Gilde by lecturers and had a particular point with the consciousness of the destruction of entire cities during the war and the need for reconstruction. The deserted city is characterized by "l'ordre muet" 'mute order': the streets are pointed like mathematical rays towards the central point, the tower of the Gothic cathedral. A traveling "ouvrier" 'worker'—"Moi maçon, le gros ouvrier le vice-serf" 'I the mason, the gross worker, the vice-serf'—laments the desertion of the city and the silence of the church:

Où la prière manuelle, les paumes jumelles, les doigts égaux ? A jamais, dans la tombe. Et les orbites vers vous ardents ! Vides. Les bouches qu'usait le sol ? Mangés

'Where are manual prayer, the twin palms, the equal fingers? Forever in the tomb. And the eyeballs that blazed towards you! Empty. The mouths that the soil wore away? Eaten'

Now that there is no place for his talents, should he simply return to God? Christ speaks to the worker, saying that he has indeed been abandoned in his Passion, but in three days, the worker will be able to open again the doors of the city. The bourgeois then speak: they have abandoned the city because of their liberation from faith—Renan and the cult of self—and their desire for the pleasures and comforts of this world; they are having a diabolical picnic. But they begin to see that their present state offers them no real satisfaction and the realization of death contradicts their desire for possession; they begin to fear God's anger at their revolt:

Est-ce que tu te révoltes contre le Centre de gravité et les relations mathématiques
Non car tu ne les promulgues pas, tu n'y changeras pas un iota. L'ordre de même—
Revenons à l'ordre.
'Do you revolt against the Center of gravity and mathematical relations?
No, for you did not promulgate them. You won't change them an iota. The same with
order—
Let us return to order.'

They return as pets and spoiled children, and God will receive them like a loving mother. The life of the city begins again with a new spirit:

C'est la Communion du travail journalier, et non le regret vain d'hier ou le désir
aléatoire de demain. Ici point de rêveurs, des maçons.
'It is the Communion of daily work, and not the futile regret of yesterday or the
chancy desire of tomorrow. Here no dreamers—masons.'

The manual work of every day is itself sacramental and brings us to God: "Le travail des sept jours, dominical, reprend" 'The Sunday work of seven days begins again.'

Du péché, de la sanction, Retour de l'âme à Dieu, Ses conditions, finished January 1917, describes the relationship of the Christian with God, using Biblical language largely borrowed from the *Song of Songs*. The soul is like a woman who tries to attract God with her youthful beauty, but he rejects her with scorn as unworthy. Some young women revolt against God, but one, feeling the desolation of life without him and the threat of death, offers herself to God as a slave, loving him for himself alone but recognizing that she is unworthy of his love. God receives her into his royal bed, and she finds in her complete abandonment to God her true liberty, God's own strength, and her high place in the order of God's universe:

Il s'est offert à moi tel un tremplin solide.
D'un bond je plonge aux hauts cieux.
Je domine tout.
Comme le drapier son tissu je déplie le Monde et le superpose à Dieu.
Mieux qu'avec l'once, l'aune, le litre
je soupèse, je mesure, je jauge toute chose

Voici que je les range dans l'ordre vrai.

J'en use selon leur utilité !

'A solid springboard was offered to me.

With a single bound I plunged into the high heavens.

I look out over all.

Like a draper his cloth, I unfold the World and superpose it on God.

Better than with ounce, ell, and liter,

I weight, I measure, I gauge each thing.

Thus I arrange them in the true order.

I use them according to their utility!'

God sends her out to others:

Et Voilà : Pars dans les ténèbres extérieures.

Comme le pêcheur ses mailles gonflées d'argent, le braconnier son plein panier de plumes,

ramène-moi d'autres amantes, bien-aimée !

'Look! Leave and go into the shadows outside.

Like the sinner with bags swollen with money, the poacher with his basket full of feathers,

bring me other lovers, my well-beloved!'

The soul accepts her mission, feeling from the right hand of God his love and from his left the sword of his power. The same duality is found in the more personal *Or m'étant assouvi, Maître, en Votre Sang vif* of May 22, 1916.

Le Cantique des fiançailles can be dated to early 1917. On a list of his poems, he wrote "sur moi" 'about me' beside this poem. The poem is about a personal subject that Charlot will treat in poetry and discuss in private prose into the late 1920s: his need and desire for a good marriage. Although *Le Cantique* is a poem on a personal subject, it is a purely formal expression of it: the situation is externalized as a dialogue between a young man and a young woman on the subject of the proper place of love and the proper purpose of matrimony. The poem begins with a declaration that human love is physical, and the lovers should not be afraid of their God-created bodies:

Il nous a donné des pieds stables sur la route

des mains prenantes au travail, nos sexes pour l'enfantement.

'He has given us stable feet on the route

clutching hands for work, our sex for procreation.'

The attraction of youthful bodies, a subject that occupies several other poems of this period, should be countered with the thought of death and Christ's physical sufferings. Both the man and the woman describe their bodies as unattractive, but their common love of God will unite them. They are too weak to think of

themselves as mutual supports, but God will be their strength. Charlot describes the meeting of Ann and Joachim at the Golden Gate, an event that Charlot loved from the non-biblical history of Mary's parents, and which he depicted in his liturgical art. Charlot seems to be trying to inculcate the right attitude in himself so that he will be ready when he meets the right woman.

5.6.

VISUAL ARTS

5.6.1. THE ARTISTIC MILIEU

Charlot recognized the resemblances of aspects of his liturgical art to the work of other artists on whom he was focusing during this period. He insisted, however, on the sequence of influences—Denis, Marcel Lenoir, Rouault, and finally Cubism—and on his conscious selection of influences according to the criterion of his main interest, muralism:

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)

Moreover, his focus on one or other influence must be considered against the background of his previous studies and broad knowledge of contemporary art. Denis' classicizing tendencies were not Charlot's source for Classicism, and Cubism continued to be a minor focus during this period—used, for example, to criticize Denis' compositions—and would later largely replace the interests of 1915–1917.

Charlot considered Cubism the contemporary art of his youth, but older artists of various schools were still active, whom Charlot studied and appreciated. The school nearest to his own liturgical art movement was the Nabis—Denis, Bonnard, Vuillard, Sérusier, and others—or, more precisely, several former members of that disbanded group. Charlot certainly saw much of their work but not all; towards the end of his life, he told me he had not known Bonnard's print *La Loge*, which he liked and found strong (Tabletalk January 13, 1979). The similarity of interests and tendencies between the Nabis and Charlot are numerous. Stylistically, the Nabis were Post-Impressionists, deriving their greater emphasis on pictorial construction from Cézanne and Gauguin. Their artistic interests ranged from medieval and Japanese art to the Italian Primitives and the early Renaissance to the Images d'Epinal, Brittany, and puppet theatre. They extended their art production to the minor arts and to murals, exploring and sometimes reviving a wide variety of media and emphasizing always the artisanal craftsmanship of the artist. The Nabis also made serious attempts to produce artworks, such as prints, that would be affordable

by a broader public than usual. In their subjects, they emphasized domestic scenes and even depicted workers; in doing this, they challenged the traditional hierarchy of subjects. The Catholics Denis and Sérusier were seriously interested in mysticism.

The differences from Charlot are also great; he basically felt that he belonged to a younger generation. His compositions were less sinuous, sketchy, and orientalizing and more sturdy, finished, and geometric. He did not like the *gaucherie* that Denis felt was a hallmark of Nabi art (e.g., Denis 1912: 167–173). Charlot did not share the Nabis' antipathy to Cubism:

[Denis] seems to have had around him admirers that were all of them of an academic caste. By that I mean people who had been mixed up with the old *Académie* and who accepted Denis as a modern artist. It was in a way luck that as soon as he formed himself and matured himself, Cubism came. That is, the first Picassos around 1907 or so and Braque. And the people who would have accepted him as modern really rushed to Picasso and Braque who they rightfully saw as being the last word in art. And Denis, even though he was not ancient at the time in any way—I think he was at the end of his thirties—found himself already old-fashioned in relation to the new trends. So he was a little bitter about Cubism. He spoke of it and wrote of it as something German, and he wrote with *k*'s; I remember at the time there was the *Kultur* with a *k* so he would say *Kubism*, with a *k* always. You could see that he was uneasy about the newfangled affairs, Cubism, the first abstract things had already been painted, and so on. (Interview September 14, 1970)

Charlot seems also to have been indifferent to the Nabis' other peeve, Fauvism. Some differences stemmed from his purely personal sensibility. Charlot was more selective in his “minor arts”; for instance, he did not work in wallpaper. He also felt a certain resistance to commercial designing; in 1962, he disliked my suggestion that he design tiles for mass production, although he did consider an offer to do so later. The Nabis were more thorough in their efforts to extend art into every aspect of living.

The ex-Nabi most important for Charlot was Maurice Denis, whose influence on his thought I have discussed above. Denis' most innovative period was in his youth, but his trip to Italy in 1897–1898 moved him to a more Classical style—starting with his murals for the Collège de Sainte-Croix at Vésinet, *La Glorification de la Croix*—which a number of his contemporaries found more conventional (e.g., Régamey 1948: 56 f.). Both the old and the new styles were, however, extremely appreciated by patrons, and Denis produced a large number of monumental artworks, including stained-glass windows, tapestries, and bas-reliefs, which he designed to be executed by others. His murals were almost all in oil, although he worked in fresco in 1915–1928 at the Chapelle du Prieuré, in 1925 at the Chapelle de l'Exposition, and in 1926–1934 in the church of St.-Nicaise at Reims. As a result, Denis was considered the premier Catholic artist of the time and was of particular interest to Charlot. Charlot admired Denis' work at the time:

Well, the St. John's Guild was a very arrived guild of people, as I said, who had commissions from the Church, and some of the commissions had been done

beautifully, in sculpture, sort of monumental sculpture, in murals, a time when Maurice Denis had done, for example, the Chapel in the Vésinet, and for us, young as we were, those things seemed accomplishments of mature people that we could not duplicate, so it's really with a sense of humility, not at all a sense of rivalry, that we had founded our own guild. (Interview October 7, 1970)

After his lecture to the Gilde on January 7, 1918, Denis invited the Gildeurs to visit his home and work place—Le Prieuré at Saint-Germain-en-Laye—”au printemps prochain” ‘the next spring.’¹²⁵ In 1914, Denis had purchased the building and grounds of the Hôpital Général built by Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan and was developing the immense rooms for various purposes, including as a meeting place for artists. Denis’ own separate atelier on the grounds had already been built in 1912 by the pioneering modern architect Auguste Perret. The whole complex has been preserved as the Musée Départemental Maurice Denis “Le Prieuré.” Charlot took advantage of the invitation. Although he had already moved beyond Denis:

I went there in awe. I was at the time just, well, I was in the army already, but I hadn't gone to the front. I was an *aspirant*, which is preparation for officer. I was in my best uniform, of course, and Maurice Denis received me very nicely. I was by far the youngest fellow in the group.¹²⁶

Charlot reacted to the visit with the severity of youth. He was “astonished” in the academic hangers-on at Denis’ studio, and his humor was piqued at Denis’ dress:

When I arrived, Denis had just received the Legion of Honor and he had it—he was, I would say, fully dressed for an artist—he had his coat with the Legion of Honor on it, but outside the coat he had the large cape without sleeves that he wore as a badge of the artist, and also on the cape another Legion of Honor, so even though I was very young and very awed, I noticed the two Legions of Honor.

Denis showed them mostly his older work, which Charlot found repetitive:

so I felt a little awkward. It was, of course, my first conversation, very close contact, with a famous artist; he certainly was a famous artist. There was an element of nearly the theater and acting that bothered me a little bit.

On the other hand, Charlot was charmed by Denis’ family setting:

I admired Denis, but I really admired him as a good man, as the father of his family perhaps more by then than I admired him as, let's say, a modern artist. I still admired him as an artist because he was a man who really knew how to paint. He had a great craft. When he calls himself a decorator I think perhaps it is a true appreciation of his art.

Charlot identified Denis’ influence in the happy section of his project for a mural in a Paris church: “I can see in there very distinctly the influence of Denis, in the certain, oh, proportions, a certain

nearly Post-Impressionist sense of color.” He discussed the same point in a later interview of November 18, 1970:

It [the mural project] reflects, of course, influences that I had come upon, and it reflects them rather clearly. I think my little first communion girls in their white or pale blues or whatnot depend on Maurice Denis for their innocence.

He felt however that he had moved beyond Denis in his composition: “On the other hand, the planning is not at all anything that Denis could have done.”

Since muralism was the basis of Charlot’s judgment of artists at the time, his differences with Denis on the technique and style of muralism were important:

Maurice Denis went into large mural painting. I remember that the first very large thing that I saw of his was for a church in Switzerland—St. Paul in Geneva—and though I was in awe of Denis as an arrived master and an excellent master painter, when those murals that had been painted, I think, on canvas, were shown in Paris, unrolled and put in a sort of a mock architecture to show the effect they would have in Switzerland, I remained dissatisfied with the work as mural. It seemed to me an absurd thing, I would say, to do murals on a material that could be rolled up and unrolled and so on. And I must say also that the percentage of Impressionism, of Post-Impressionism, if you want, that remained in Denis’ paintings bothered me. It didn’t seem to me proper for mural painting. The main picture was St. Paul, I think on a boat in the tempest or some such things, and it was full of the fury of the waves and the fury of the wind and Paul preaching in the middle of the boat, and the language used, which of course was the proper language for Denis, made me realize that even though I admired him, I wasn’t at all along his lines when it came to mural painting. As I said, at the time I found a more solid anchor into Cubism, even though Cubism had nothing to show as mural painting. I felt that the secret virtues, if you want, of Cubism were closer to my own idea of murals. (Interview October 7, 1970)

Charlot’s main dissatisfaction was characteristically with Denis’ sense of composition:

But I’ve seen some big Maurice Denis for example—St. Paul in the ship and so on, the wreck of the ship of St. Paul, I think, for a Swiss church—and Denis is rather innocent about the problems that intrigue me. I think he is not really a born mural painter. Or he is a born mural painter only in the sense that he has admired the very light average values of fresco, the fact that the fresco, unlike oil painting, cannot go into very darks in the shadows, and he has imitated that in his form of painting, either tempera or in oil. But that is purely an influence of the medium, and he...I don’t think he’s gone as deep into the problems of relation to architecture that other people have. So there is influence of Maurice Denis on me, especially in that sort of Neo-Impressionist or Nabi type of thing, and maybe even in the niceties of the devotional

attitude of those people. And there is that influence of Lenoir in the elongated proportions. But the deep problems, which would have come out better, of course, in the finished mural than they did in the small sketch, I was very conscious at the time that they were problems proposed, for example, by Nicholas Poussin. (Interview November 18, 1970)

On composition, Charlot felt much closer to Marcel Lenoir, as will be seen below.

Charlot criticized Denis on a number of other points. Certain aspects of Denis' work clashed with the Gildeurs' medieval ideals at the time:

We come always to the same things. The artisan, instead of reinventing things that already had been used for what we could call the parishioners' prayers, was better. I mentioned Denis. Denis, in a way, seemed to me too modern in the sense that he was inventing, and I tried, myself, really to follow what I called the tradition, which seemed to me very important, and I was not conscious of creating, or more exactly my ideal was to follow, not to create. Of course, it doesn't work that way. But that was what I was trying to do. (Interview October 13, 1970)

For Charlot, Denis' style was at once too modernizing and not modern enough. Charlot reacted also against Denis' palette, feeling that his art lithographs were too pretty (Tabletalk undated, early 1970s). Charlot worked in a stronger black during his liturgical period and later made full-color lithographs that he based on the more plebeian oleographs. Ultimately, Charlot felt that Denis was a member of an older generation:

It has been in a way the fate of Maurice Denis, now that I can think of it in retrospect, to be a wonderful guy who would start something and he would start it fresh and sometimes with a real revolutionary novelty in his ideas, but the things he started in five or six years faded so quickly because some other people, or younger people, or bolder people would come in and do something, well, that superseded, as I said, the things that Denis did, and I am afraid that the Gilde St. Jean was something of that type. (Interview October 7, 1970)

Charlot maintained personal contact with Denis after the war. In a letter of April 14, 1919, to Marie J. de Fréminville about the Gilde, Denis mentions "M. Charlot qui est venu chez moi ces jours-passés" 'Mr. Charlot who has been to my home these last days.'

Closely connected to Denis was George Desvallières (1861–1950), who codirected Denis' Atelier d'art sacré, founded in 1919 (Colombier January 10, 1921: 98). Desvallières was a direct link to the Neoclassical painters of the nineteenth-century; he finished the work in the Panthéon of his teacher, Jules-Elie Delaunay, after his death.¹²⁷ Charlot felt some of his work was stronger than Denis':¹²⁸

Another one of our models was Georges Desvallières, then famous for a *Sacred Heart in a Bomb-burst* painted in memory of his son, killed in the war. I still feel the impact of the work as I felt it then: liquid reds and deep ultramarines bleeding through a scribbled mesh of black lines suggested that the roots of Desvallières' art fed on the

same earth where Chartres stood. His style, bold as any I had yet seen, hinted at a way out of the cloying innuendoes of symbolism.

Desvallières was, however, usually more conventional. Charlot stated in an interview circa 1971:

There was another one who didn't quite survive, maybe they will revive his works sometime, was Desvallières. And Desvallières was a man who was unhappily the near force but not quite the force [so] that when the real force [came along] like Georges Rouault, Desvallières appeared as a mild thing compared with Rouault. We were not that modern that we enjoyed Georges Rouault.

Charlot maintained that a more important figure for him was Marcel Lenoir,¹²⁹ mentioned in a quotation above, whom he admired both as an artist and as a heroic proponent of fresco:

Among the living, we are going to see some of the people that I respected very much. I was born a painter, I would say, more or less at the same time that Cubism was born. But there was another element, and, because I don't have any slides about that, I have to speak of it now. It is a man that for the moment has not survived: Marcel Lenoir... He was a great example for me because he was a man who was a born mural painter. In fact, he was a born fresco painter, and at the time, well, let's say 1910 or so, nobody but nobody knew what he was about. Because he wanted to paint in fresco—and he certainly couldn't afford a mason—he built his own walls, with trowel, mortar, and brick. He couldn't build a big wall, because he wanted to show his fresco at the Salon... where every year all the people showed. I remember him arriving with his little wall. It was about that height, maybe four feet high, on *wheels*. He had to put wheels on his wall to bring it to the Salon. And... I was going to say museum people... well, the Salon isn't a museum, but some people get annoyed at things that are unusual. And that poor little brick wall on wheels didn't look very artistic to the people. It was the time when you still put those gold frames, heavy gold frames, on your oil easel pictures. So they always put him in the wrong place. There was no light, or he was in the way of the people. They had to push his fresco sidewise. I thought he was a heroic man. He really and truly was a heroic man. He was born a mural painter; he was born a fresco painter at a time when nobody cared about those things, and he's one of the great influences on my life. (March 8, 1972)

There was another man who—why? I don't know why—has not survived: a great monumental artist, Marcel-Lenoir. It was a strange case because he was a mural painter, but he never got a commission in his life. So he had to build his own walls. He built a little wall that he could put on wheels and carried this wall with the fresco painted on it to the salon. And really the first frescoes I saw that were true frescoes were by Marcel-Lenoir, put on the sort of a fake wall that he had to put up himself. That was a great example for me. There was something heroic about the man. (ca. 1971 Charlot)

Charlot emphasized MarcelLenoir's work in fresco: "I learned from him to love above other media the tactile feel, matte surface, and limited palette of true fresco" (AA I 287 f.). MarcelLenoir first used "fresque au ciment" 'cement fresco,' composed of "une partie de sable pour deux parties de ciment" 'one part sand to two parts cement'; he even used "du ciment liquide coloré" 'colored liquid cement' (Lenossos 1936: 34). Only later did he change to the more traditional technique, "la fresque au mortier : deux parties de sable, une partie de chaux" 'fresco with mortar: two parts sand to one part lime.' Although Charlot never mentioned it, MarcelLenoir's example may have influenced his own much-criticized decision to use cement in his first fresco in Mexico.

Charlot also compared MarcelLenoir specifically to Denis, whom he did not mention in the talk quoted above:

JC: There was, however, another influence which was stronger on me than Denis and that was that of MarcelLenoir. MarcelLenoir isn't very well known now, though he has some of his things in museums and so on, but he was a man more severe than Denis, without the charm of Denis and perhaps closer to what I myself was becoming at the time. So the mixture between Lenoir and Denis somehow would account for my earliest style when I started thinking in terms of murals.

JPC: But Denis uses a lot of architecture in some of his decorations, large square balconies, arches, etc., and he got this a lot from Florentine painting; some of it must have been fresco painting. Do you think that that filtered...that, if you want, muralesque architectural aspect in your work, what there is of it, came through Denis, or do you think you got it directly from the same sources he got it from?

JC: Well, I can't think of him very much as an architectural artist, perhaps because his architecture, even though it was drawn on the canvas originally, after the colors were set in, became so atmospheric that it wasn't architecture any more. Marcel Lenoir, to come back to the man who was a man who used architecture without putting sort of a haze of atmosphere over it and he would have been my model if I hadn't had, of course, the models in the Louvre which were even clearer. (Interview September 14, 1970)

Charlot described his own first mural project as "something close enough to the Post-Impressionism, let's say, of Denis, close enough to a man like MarcelLenoir, which is rather difficult to describe as a stylist" (Interview September 19, 1970). Nevertheless, Charlot did state about the mural in the same passage in which he recognized the influence of Denis: "But I think that the soldiers—I have some of those veterans or wounded soldiers and so on—depend for the elongation of the proportions and the limbs and whatnot on MarcelLenoir" (Interview November 18, 1970). Although he thought Denis was incapable of the composition of the mural, he felt: "Perhaps MarcelLenoir could have done it if he had had a chance, but the man never got a complex mural commission." Charlot also identified the monumentality of his *Chemin de Croix* and the elongation of its figures as elements influenced by MarcelLenoir:

It's probably the most, I wouldn't say obvious, but the most, well, monumental, whatever you want to put on it, thing that I got from my admiration of Marcel Lenoir. Much of my work, as we could say, has stocky proportions that are a little similar to those that you find in Mexican pre-Hispanic manuscripts, for example, on stone idols, and so on, quite short in relation to the Greek classical standard proportions for the human body. But Marcel Lenoir had very elongated proportions. (Interview November 6, 1970)

Charlot's knowledge and impression of Marcel Lenoir were limited to his own period in France. After Charlot left for Mexico, Marcel Lenoir received several large mural commissions, notably the true fresco *The Coronation of the Virgin* at the Institut Catholique de Toulouse, executed in 1924–1925: "M. Marcel Lenoir, qui se dévoue si intelligemment et si ardemment à restaurer la technique de la fresque, a très bien vu qu'elle convient particulièrement à la décoration des églises..." "Mr. Marcel Lenoir, who devotes himself so intelligently and ardently to restoring the technique of fresco, has seen very well that it is particularly suited to the decoration of churches..."¹³⁰ Moreover, Charlot was apparently unaware of Marcel Lenoir's writings.¹³¹ In these, Marcel Lenoir portrayed himself as an independent, indeed isolated, artist, and accordingly supported the view of the artist as solitary genius much different from the craftsman (although craftsmanship is emphasized more when discussing fresco [1928: 33, 36]). On other points, Marcel Lenoir's views agreed largely with those of Catholic Classicists like Denis: the artist should be characterized by humility and probity, should accept his social role, and produce his art as a form of prayer ("Toute œuvre religieuse doit être une prière" 'Every religious work must be a prayer' [29, also 15]). These and many other views of Marcel Lenoir's coincided with Charlot's own: the primacy of nature, the artist's need to preserve his connection to childlike observation ("tu protégeras l'enfant qui demeure toujours en l'homme" 'you will protect the child that always live in the adult' [75]), the fundamental importance of drawing, the subordination of detail to total effect, and the appropriateness of noble, indeed religious, subject matter for fresco (101). Such ideas were either traditional or in the ambiance of the French Catholic Renaissance. On other points, Marcel Lenoir differed markedly from Charlot: his dislike of his earlier works (44), his depreciation of museums as means of instruction, his desire to improvise on the wall (62), and his atypical rejection of art as a form of apostolate ("L'Apostolat, en Art, est une utopie" 'The Apostolate, in art, is utopist' [20]). Marcel-Lenoir was for Charlot a stylistic influence and a personal inspiration rather than an intellectual source.

The third Catholic liturgical artist that Charlot focused on was Rouault, whom he clearly portrays as a step forward from Denis: "When I graduated, so to speak, from Maurice Denis, the natural master in the modern language for a Catholic was Georges Rouault..."; during Charlot's Denis period, "We were not that modern that we enjoyed Georges Rouault."¹³² In fact, at the time that Charlot was primarily interested in Denis, Rouault was not yet recognized:

I must say that of course Rouault was around and doing Catholic art, but he wasn't known yet. I would say the publicity around his work hadn't been done, and I knew him only as the director of the Gustave Moreau Museum. I had seen him and so on,

but I thought of him as a museum director rather than an artist... (Interview
September 14, 1970)

Rouault had already been given several one-man shows and had been working with the dealer Ambroise Vollard since 1907, so Charlot's lack of acquaintance with his work is another indication of the difficulty of defining how much he or his contemporaries knew about an artist. Rouault was generally of the same mind as Charlot: both were admirers of Bloy and had a deep concern for the poor and social justice. Charlot admired Rouault, a stronger artist than Denis, and wrote to Brenner in the 1920s:

Rouault is the only authentic disciple (spiritual one) of Daumier. Forain for example is a false disciple. Rouault is deeply Catholic. His religious pictures (Baptism of Christ, etc...) explain the ugliness of the non religious ones (ugliness with meaning.) (cf: Orozco and St Francis.) ("A long nice letter")

However, as seen above, Charlot gradually came to dislike his sketchiness, which was inappropriate for muralism and ultimately the cause of Rouault's failure in that field. I can see no stylistic influence of Rouault on Charlot's work.

Charlot studied many other artists only some of whom can be specified with certainty for this period. For instance, he was a lifelong admirer of Velázquez—Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (1599–1660)—and could consider him a soul mate. Rodney Medeiros told me on April 9, 2006, that when he bought the 1969 oil *Woman Carrying Basket in Grays*, Charlot called it "My masterpiece" and added, "I think this is a painting Velázquez would have understood." I have found, however, no reference to that artist among the surviving documents of Charlot's French period. Charlot's exposure to the works of Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) was recorded only because Charlot's friend, Stefan Baciu, prevailed on him late in life to write an article on the Rumanian artist (1977 Brancusi). In prewar France, Charlot had "admired the Brancusis for their boldness, for their uniqueness." They had represented a different direction from the Cubism Charlot was studying with their connections to *art nègre* and "Rumanian folk ways." Charlot continued to study Brancusi in the United States and Hawai'i.

Charlot's influences were in all likelihood the major ones for other Gildeurs as well. An indication of this is that similar composers can be found in their concerts. The program for a *Concert du Dimanche 21 Janvier 1917 au profit de "la Gilde Notre-Dame": Association d'Artistes Catholiques* was kept by Charlot, probably as a remembrance of his mother and sister's participation. The contemporary avant-garde is missing, like Stravinsky, but a worthy choice of composers is presented from the early nineteenth century through late Romanticism, like César Franck (1822–1890), to the contemporary Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924). This choice reflects the taste of the Gilde music teacher and choir director, Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931), a progressive student of Franck and promoter of German music, Gregorian chant, and the use of folk music in classical music.

Charlot emphasized that the Gildeurs did not conform to one style, and *La Gilde* called for submissions to the 1918 exhibition "qui incarnent le plus profondément leur caractère personnel" "which embody most profoundly their personal character" ("L'Exposition" March 25, 1918). The stylistic variety

of the Gilde can be appreciated in a photograph taken of Charlot, Marguerite Huré, and Renée Trudon at a Gilde exhibition in 1916.¹³³ Charlot's woodcut *Le pêcheur/Skeleton* (Morse number 2) differs markedly from Huré's *Madonna and Child: Gilde de Notre Dame* and *Head of Christ Fallen* hung below it. Charlot's two polychrome wood bas-reliefs of angels share subjects with two others—single or dominant figure, halo, and flowers—but the styles are different; the horizontal relief done by someone else has a Renaissance fleshiness in the figures, and the nearly square one seems to have been done in a deliberately naïve style. The sculpture-in-the-round that can be seen most clearly is inspired by Rodin. Though differing in style, the Gildeurs were working in the same media; woodcuts and especially polychrome wood bas-reliefs were not common at the time. Moreover, they were pushing in several directions; the large cartoon of a Deposition from the Cross, partially visible on the wall, is interesting in view of Charlot's later work. Working with a group of like-minded artists was supportive and suggestive.

The Gilde artist Charlot remembered particularly was the Beaux-Arts student Marguerite Felicitée Huré (December 9, 1896–October 27, 1967):

Perhaps the person I was closest to was Marguerite Huré...we were so young. Her intention was to become a stained-glass maker, and she had done already some little fragments of stained glass; later on she did some great works for the medieval cathedrals, not only repairing glass, but doing some windows on her own. She was beautifully gifted as an artist within that particular limitation of the craft, and to see her even at that time cutting the glass with the diamond and curving the lead for the leading of the windows, all those things were a very nice illustration of art as artisanship.¹³⁴

Reconstructing damaged churches was one of the ideas of the Gilde and absorbed many of the French artists interested in stained glass (Denis 1922: 271). Besides her work in restoration, Huré realized designs by Denis and Desvallières and created original windows, working with the architect Auguste Perret and the liturgical-art organizer, Marie-Alain Couturier. Huré is increasingly recognized as important in the twentieth-century revival of the art of stained glass.

Charlot kept two copies of Huré's woodcut of the *Madonna and Child: Gilde de Notre Dame*.¹³⁵ The figure of Mary has been elongated to the point of distortion in order to fill the narrow rectangle of the block; Charlot may have been alluding to this print in "Nous les Jeunes !" in the passage on fitting the image to the surface:

"Mais alors, répliquez-vous, vous décidez un panneau long, est-ce que vous allez allonger vos personnages en hauteur et déplacer leurs proportions ?"

Parfaitement et nous ne ferons que continuer l'exemple des Maîtres anciens, obtenant ainsi une grande impression de beauté et d'unité.

"But then, you will answer, when you decorate a long panel, are you going to elongate your personages in height and displace their proportions?"

Perfectly, and we will be doing nothing more than continuing the example of the ancient Masters, achieving in this way a great impression of beauty and unity.’

Mary’s long robed body is divided into three vertical rounded sections—accentuated by Mary’s feet—causing it to resemble a set of Gothic fused columns. The child in swaddling clothes forms a third column, tipped slightly at an angle on Mary’s arm. His head inclines in the opposite direction towards Mary’s, which she tips towards him. The resulting pyramidal design is broadened by the upper background. The background sections below that, on either side of Mary’s body, are flattened onto a series of superposed levels upon which heraldically simplified plants, grass, and a stream are scratched. Mary’s body is connected to the background on her right by shading her body into it and on her left by the elegant horizontal gesture of her hand that corresponds to one of the background levels. The print is carefully composed and accomplished. The solid areas are generous but lightened by the color printing; the gestures and plants make a delicate, feminine impression.

Huré’s *Head of Christ Fallen*, visible below the *Madonna and Child* in the photograph of the Gilde exhibition, is a much stronger work.¹³⁶ Christ has fallen painfully on his cheek, and his mouth opens in weakened pain. His face is scarred and ugly, bearded and with a prominent Jewish nose. He looks like a *poilu* dead in a trench. The dark area massed behind his head seems to press him down, while a rope is thrown over his neck. Unlike her first print, Huré has deemphasized the outline of the block, drawing all attention to the face of Christ.

Charlot thought that another print in his collection was by Huré; it is untitled and unsigned.¹³⁷ The whole printing block provides the tone while the image is cut into its surface: a painful, ghastly face emerges out of the shadows and looks open-mouthed at the viewer. With its prominent teeth, the face reminds one of Charlot’s own dream images. The grain of the woodblock is rough and apparent, and Huré has used its curvings expressively. The demarcation of sections with thick black lines and the absolute contrast between dark and light areas may be influenced by Huré’s work in stained-glass windows. The overall effect resembles the slightly earlier work of Emil Nolde, like *Prophet* of 1912, and anticipates that of Kathe Kollwitz. Huré also did the strong masthead for *La Gilde*, and one of her studies is reproduced on the front page of the first issue (October 25, 1917). In the latter, possibly a woodblock portrait, the placement of the head is similar to that of the third print described above. The use of black areas is again generous, but the lines are more sinuous and weaker than in her two strongest prints. Charlot kept also an ex libris: “Huré graveur rue de Lyon” ‘Huré, engraver, rue de Lyon.’ The block again provides the green tone into which Huré has cut the cursive lettering that shows up in white.

Huré is an original artist who reaches at times an extraordinary strength and intensity. Charlot felt that Huré’s work in stained glass gave a roughness and toughness to her style, which he admired.¹³⁸ Her works in the Jean Charlot Collection are too early to have been influenced by Rouault; any resemblance between their work derives, I believe, from their common inspiration from stained-glass windows.

Charlot clearly appreciated Huré’s work; the first two prints described above have holes where they were attached to a wall for viewing. He visited her in 1919 on his return from the war and found her

working in a large studio with many helpers; she was in fact in the process of founding her atelier. He did not see her on his return from his exploratory trip to Mexico, and they did not correspond although he was interested to have news of her.¹³⁹ He compared the situation to that of old school friends; sometimes one goes on seeing them, sometimes not. When Charlot returned to Paris in 1968, on the occasion of my marriage, he tried to see her. She was living in a large studio with rolls of cartoons for stained glass windows.¹⁴⁰ The door was opened by a young woman, and Charlot asked to see Huré. He heard her voice from another room, but the young woman would not let Charlot enter, so he left. My mother considered this an extreme example of my father's diffidence; she was sure that if my father had explained who he was, Huré would have been very moved to see him.

In the broader art world, Charlot continued to regard Cubism as the main movement of contemporary art. He did not condemn Cubism as a rupture with tradition, as was being done by conservatives and the newly Classicizing avant-garde (Silver 1989: 107); for Charlot, it was the latest chapter in the French classical tradition of geometric composition. Charlot felt that Cubist influence was already present in his liturgical art, that it became a major focus after the war, and that he integrated it into his new style in Mexico:

I had in me in France, already, two things that really didn't work very well together. One of them was, let's call it again the Nabi-Catholic strain and the other was the Cubist strain. We have some very early Cubist pictures of mine. They had remained dormant, I would say, while I was trying to do those Catholic things. There is a certain, of course, compositional order in the *Way of the Cross*, to take it, the one in woodcuts, to take it as an example, but I would say Cubism is very low there. It's just not much of it; it's just a minimum to make a composition, and the rest—the elongated figures and the spirituality or spiritualism, if you want, are still what I call Gilde Notre Dame. But I had made much stronger things in small gouaches and so on in the Cubist manner, and so in Mexico, the Nabi-Gilde Notre Dame strain faded out because the climate, if you want, was improper for it, and the early Cubist strain came back with a revenge, so to speak, in those big Indian heads. Of course, pre-Hispanic and Cubism go together very well, and what there is of pre-Hispanic in Indian modes urged me, so to speak, to use my Cubist means. (Interview August 7, 1971)

The avant-garde Classical or, more properly, Neoclassical movement is receiving increasing art-historical attention and is considered rightly a source for the Mexican Mural Renaissance, especially through Rivera and Siqueiros. That avant-garde movement has, however, obscured earlier Neoclassical activity that was an important part of the art world during Charlot's youth. As early as 1902, Denis stated: "Il se pourrait que nous fussions à la veille d'une période d'art classique" 'We could be on the eve of a period of Classical art' (1912: 86). He considered Ingres the great teacher and his students as perpetuating his principles especially through their extensive mural work (1912: 86–123; also 198). In 1908, Denis wrote of the "mouvement néo-classique qui entraîne une partie de la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui" 'Neoclassical movement that is carrying along a part of today's youth' and described it in terms that could be applied to the later avant-garde movement: "la sensualité demi-païenne, demi-renaissance, élégante,

versailleuse et un peu académique des jeunes classiques” ‘the sensuality of the young Classicists: half-pagan, half-Renaissance, elegant, Versailles-style, and a little academic’ (1912: 144 f.). Again in 1909, he wrote that “la jeunesse est devenue résolument classique” ‘young people have become resolutely Classical’ and that “dans le vocabulaire des critiques d’avant-garde le mot ‘classique’ est le suprême éloge, et sert par conséquent à désigner les tendances ‘avancées’” ‘in the vocabulary of avant-garde critics, the word *classical* is the highest praise and serves in consequence to designate “advanced” tendencies’ (1912: 258 f.). This movement was partly connected to the politics of such right-wing writers as Barrès and Maurras (1912: 182). When the avant-garde interest in Ingres was at its peak, on the occasion of the major 1921 exhibition of that artist’s work, Denis described the current mood as “le besoin d’un retour aux idées classiques” ‘the need to return to Classical ideas’ that would lead to “une renaissance classique” ‘a Classical Renaissance’ (1921: 258). Charlot’s contact with such Classicism was primarily through the later work of Denis himself, which he felt was different from his own, as seen above.¹⁴¹ He reacted more negatively to the avant-garde Neoclassicism in the postwar period, as I will discuss later.

The war years were a time of great stylistic ferment, and many artists developed powerful personal styles, like Georges Rouault. I will discuss possible individual influences when I describe Charlot’s works below.

5.6.2. LITURGICAL CLOTH

The earliest surviving works connected to Charlot’s liturgical period are designs for images in cloth to be used on the *galons* ‘galloons, cloth band trim,’ of vestments. The choice of medium is significant. Charlot would not be using his expertise with the brush; indeed, his mother would be sewing his earliest designs. Charlot then went on to design larger images to be woven into cloth for vestments. Again, these would have been realized by other hands. Both the designs for the galloons and for the cloths were completed in time for an exhibition in early 1917.

Charlot’s choice of medium was odd in the context of the gender separation of the arts at that time (Weisberg and Becker 1999: 119 f., 124, 127; also, 117 ff.). Sewing, stitchery, embroidery, cloth design, and so on, were all classed as “cet art féminin” ‘this feminine art’ (Denis 1922: 273). All were common domestic tasks of women. In the early 1700s, Fénelon advised a noble on the upbringing of her daughter.

Occupez-la d’un ouvrage de tapisserie qui sera utile dans votre maison, et qui l’accoutumera à se passer du commerce dangereux du monde, mais ne la laissez point raisonner sur la théologie au grand péril de sa foi. (Fénelon 1997: 1131)

‘Occupy her with a work of tapestry, which will be useful in your house and which will accustom her to do without the dangerous contact with the world; but do not let her argue about theology to the great peril of her faith.’

Women customarily did such work while conversing, and many examples of Mexican “blonde” lace have been passed down in the family. Such work could be developed into a skilled craft. Henri had told Anne and Odette to learn sewing so that they would have some livelihood in case of catastrophe; Anne would in fact earn money as a seamstress in Mexico, making clothes for the family of Carlos Mérida among others (Mérida, personal communication). Such work could also be developed into an art. At the Ateliers d’Art Sacré of Denis and Desvallières, Mlle. Sabine Desvallières (1891–1935) directed the “broderie et chasublerie” ‘embroidery and chasuble making’ and made an important contribution to liturgical textile art.¹⁴² I conclude that Charlot chose to work in the medium to give his mother something to do. Anne wrote Jean on January 23, 1928: “la broderie m’ayant toujours plu comme si c’était une peinture” ‘embroidery has always pleased me as if it were painting.’ In the Rondels, her interest, time, and manual labor were being absorbed into an artistic project, another example of making the Gilde a family activity. My conclusion is supported by a meditation of late 1918 (*Notebook C*). Charlot complains about his lack of productivity: he has spent his time “en broderie” ‘on embroidery’ and “d’ouvrages de dames” ‘women’s works,’ while only producing “quelques sculptures—mais sans régularité possible” ‘a few sculptures—but without possible regularity.’ Charlot seems to be blaming himself for being distracted from his more important work, sculpture, to the less important “ouvrages de dames.” Balancing this moment of exasperation are Charlot’s expressions of pride in his designs and his mother’s execution of them. He felt positive enough about his designs to exhibit them, and they won prizes. Finally, Charlot later made larger designs that were clearly not designed for execution by a single person; that is, he continued in the medium without the purpose of providing his mother with an activity.

For Charlot, the craft aspect of the media he used in his liturgical works accorded with one of his most essential ideas of art:

But what I was doing then, I wouldn’t have described myself as a painter because I preferred the artisan angle and working on direct carving, working on woodcuts, which was the same thing with the same tools than the carving, and of course the idea of weaving the designs for the liturgical cloth, those things were all tied up to manual labor. And all through my life, that idea of manual labor being an integral part of the arts has been one of my major, I would say, acts of faith. (Interview October 7, 1970)

The expression “acts of faith” is not accidental; for Charlot, art making was a form of worship and prayer.

Charlot’s work in cloth was appreciated at the time. He remembered correctly that he had received a prize for his liturgical cloth designs at the 1917 exhibition of the Société de Saint-Jean, Exposition D’Art Liturgique, at the Pavillon de Marsan.¹⁴³ C. de Cordis wrote in *La Revue Moderne* of April 1921:

Au cours de la guerre, en 1917, il a fait un envoi qui fut apprécié à l’exposition Saint-Jean. Ses projets d’étoffes furent primés.
 ‘During the war in 1917, he sent a contribution that was appreciated to the exhibition Saint-Jean. His projects for cloths were awarded a prize.’

A document, dated March 21, 1917, communicates the award of fifty francs from the Commission d'Art Liturgique:

Nous sommes heureux de vous faire savoir que, le Jury ayant classé votre Œuvre, vous avez obtenu un prix de la catégorie : Tissus et Galons pour vêtements sacerdotaux.

Nous vous exprimons toutes nos félicitations.

Pour la Commission

La Présidente

La Duchesse d'Estissac

'We are happy to inform you that the Jury having judged your Work, you have won a prize in the category: Cloths and Braid for liturgical vestments.

We send you all our congratulations.

For the Commission

President

The Duchess d'Estissac'

Moreover, Charlot's cloth designs were reviewed favorably by Abel Fabre in *Le Mois littéraire et pittoresque*:

Cependant, les quelques bonnes volontés qu'il a été possible de grouper font bien augurer de l'avenir. Parmi elles se signale M. Charlot pour ses modèles de tissus et de galons ornés de scènes évangéliques. Ces petites compositions d'une invention extraordinaire, étaient du plus joli effet, et l'exécution de deux d'entre elles montrait qu'elles eussent encore gagné d'être réalisées. J'ai [admiré son] *Annonciation* minuscule, en tapisserie brodée, faite de trois bouts d'étoffe violette, rose et verte. C'était d'un véritable artiste, qui sait la valeur d'un ton, d'une ligne, et combien peu compte le procédé. M. Charlot est une de nos promesses d'avenir. En lui, nous pouvons saluer cette jeune école catholique dont il nous disait lui-même récemment les ambitions et les tendances dans une conférence à la Gilde de Notre-Dame. (March 1917 [?])

'Nevertheless, the few good-willed people that were able to be assembled augur well for the future. Among them Mr. Charlot stands out for his models of cloths and braids decorated with biblical scenes. These little compositions of an extraordinary inventiveness, made the prettiest impression, and the execution of two of them showed that they would have been even better if realized in cloth. I [admired his] tiny *Anunciation*, in embroidered tapestry, made of three pieces of violet, rose, and green cloth. He was a true artist, who knew the value of a tone, a line, and how little the particular method of working counts. Mr. Charlot is one of our promises of a future. In him, we can salute this young Catholic school whose ambitions and tendencies he described for us recently in a lecture at the Gilde Notre-Dame.'

Unlike his negative or mixed feelings about some of his work of this period, Charlot would have liked to have seen his cloth designs realized, even after so many years:

I did also at the time some designs for weaving cloth for liturgical clothing. I still have the drawings, and some day perhaps we can translate them into the woven cloth for which they were made. I think they would be very beautiful. (Interview October 7, 1970)

The earliest designs for cloth are fifteen *Rondels of the Mysteries of the Rosary* to be sewn onto galloons.¹⁴⁴ Charlot left two notes on these:

Rondels. Mysteries of Rosary. Designs for silk mosaics. Done for mother. Did Crucifixion and Rondel of Visitation (?). ca. 1915. Before larger things. War-time. Gilde. Did all of them. (“Jean Charlot’s Notes on Early French Work”)

Around the same time, Charlot also wrote on my working list of his early pieces:

Mysteries of the Rosary for cloth mosaic to be done by my mother. Visitation (?) exists. 1915–1917?

Charlot was clear that the Rondels were his earliest liturgical works, although he was unsure of the exact date. I would date them to late 1915 or early 1916. Charlot expresses himself unclearly on the way many of the designs were realized in cloth. The Jean Charlot Collection contains two sewn examples: *The Agony in the Garden* and *The Women at the Tomb*.¹⁴⁵ Fabre mentions *The Annunciation* in his review.

Charlot’s designs exploit the medium or the material. First, the cloth images are the same size as the designs; throughout his life, Charlot would prefer designing in the actual size of the project. A cloth mosaic is made with pieces of colored cloth, which results in areas of flat color. The color areas are outlined with stitches, and interior stitching can add “drawing” to the image. Multiple stitches can be used on an area, as in brocade, to create texture. These are always monochrome in Charlot’s designs, that is, he does not mix threads. The essentials of the style arise therefore from the medium: strong lines and outlines with areas of flat color. Charlot has restricted himself to an unusual set of four—a light pink, dark green, brown, and purple—with which he creates varied and sumptuous effects: rich dark areas and striking light ones.

An expert seamstress can create almost any line, but straight and gently curved lines are easier to sew, that is, more appropriate to the medium. Charlot has chosen the rondel form to accord with curving lines, and such lines dominate the compositions. For instance, the outline of an object will often coincide with the rounded outer edge of the Rondel, such as an angel’s wings, an arched back, and a sagging, sleeping body. Charlot can play humorously with the shape; in *Jesus in the Temple*, one of the learned disputants, placed in front of a pillar between two arching columns, appears to be wearing a fool’s cap. Also witty are the slight protuberances from the basic circular shape. Indeed, the circular shape of the composition has been emphasized to the extent that the Rondels can be rotated and preserve their legibility, useful when they are being worn during a service. Several Rondels have no definite vertical axis and seem to demand rotation. For instance, in *The Visitation*, the bodies of Mary and Elizabeth meet

at an angle as they embrace, and the Rondel must be turned to make one or the other body plumb; the curbed hems of the robes describe that turning. The same device is used in *Jesus in the Temple*. Straight lines are used less frequently and then for contrast, for instance, in the plumb lines of the occasional architecture or the staccato scarring of Jesus' skin in *The Crowning with Thorns*. When Charlot wants to give the image a more vertical orientation in the two versions of *The Ascension*, he straightens somewhat his lines and cuts deeper into the circle.

The stocky figures that Charlot based on Breton art fill out the interior of the Rondels and, along with the simplicity of the medium, contribute to the slight folk impression of the cloths. This impression is supported by the unglamorized, undramatized, everyday mood of the sacred events, which Charlot learned from Anne-Catherine Emmerich and others (Interview September 21, 1970). The figures have, however, been simplified into outlines with grace and elegance—such as the angel in *The Women at the Tomb*—qualities that will intensify as Charlot develops this style. Moreover, the figures are strongly emotional, even Expressionistic, in gesture, as in *The Annunciation*, and in posture, as in *The Agony in the Garden* and *The Crowning with Thorns*.

Despite their size, the Rondels contain a surprising number of figures without confusion, a result of the intricate compositions used to interrelate all the elements of the image. Those compositions are characteristically geometric, like the central X of *The Coronation*. Charlot plays with the dominant circular form to the point of using it to express the third dimension: in *The Flagellation*, the side edges describe the paths of the lashes inflicted by the soldiers on either side of Jesus. Significantly, the compositions are expansive, centripetal rather than centrifugal. Bursting outwards like the protruding cutouts, they make the Rondels seem bigger than they are. Indeed, the basic impression is monumental rather than jewel-like, and Charlot was able to expand the composition of *The Carrying of the Cross* to the larger scale of a bas-relief. The combination in the Rondels of a limited medium, a small space, and a complicated exploitation of them creates their curious impression of concentrated power.

The two surviving examples of sewn Rondels reveal that Anne realized the designs more as brocade than mosaic: she used a circle of pink silk as the ground on which she stitched the outlines and colored the areas with parallel stitches. The Rondel was then sewn onto a golden silk (?) band and rimmed with thin, black cording; the same cording was used to create a random, serpentine design over the surface of the band. Anne's use of a circular base limited her ability to pass beyond the perimeter of the circle, as Charlot's designs do. Moreover, the thick yarn she used forced her to simplify the shapes of the designed lines and even to reduce their number, as can be seen in the faces in both her Rondels. Charlot, however, expected a craftsman to modify his designs, and I remember the tone of tender affection that came into his voice when he told me his mother had done the work.

Charlot, therefore, started his liturgical period with a realized, assured style, not a tentative experiment. The next stages of his style are understandable from his own personal development, but surprising in the art-historical context. Charlot would maintain the simplified, outlined forms developed in the Rondels with their long, graceful, curving lines. He would also elongate his figures as the expression of spirituality he describes in "Nous les Jeunes !" The result is a striking anticipation of the

art moderne or art deco style that flowered in the 1920s. Charlot's liturgical purpose ensures that his style has none of the eroticism, irony, and luxuriousness associated with art deco or any of its marketability; and he himself did not use this style when he attempted advertising work after the war. The creation of this style at this moment remains, however, an oddity.

Certainly, Charlot's style derives partially from the Cloisonnisme of the Nabis—"les lignes noires et les teintes plates" 'the lines black and the colors flat' (Denis 1912: 20)—who were themselves one of the sources of art deco. Charlot's work does not, however, look like theirs: his compositions are tighter and more Western than Japanese. As far as I have been able to determine, the contemporary artworks that most resemble Charlot's are some mid-teens bas-reliefs by Elie Nadelman, himself one of the main sources of the art deco style. Lincoln Kirstein's description of Nadelman's sculpture fits Charlot's liturgical style as well:

The outlines were suites of curves expressing a general direction of gesture of the limbs. After the gross shapes were blocked out, he made further decomposition towards analysis; descriptive arcs were bisected and trisected, reciprocals encompassed the interior masses; finally there was an enveloping unification.¹⁴⁶

That Nadelman's style was impressive is shown by the fact that Picasso used it for an essay in Classicism, the *Bathers, Biarritz* of 1918.¹⁴⁷ Nadelman had been given major exhibitions in Paris in 1909 and 1913, so although Charlot never mentioned it to me, he could have known his style even before Nadelman reached his greatest fame in the fashion and advertising worlds after the war. Nevertheless, Charlot's style has none of the gingerly innovating quality so characteristic of Nadelman throughout his career; Charlot's style is immediately set and assured. Moreover, the visual similarities between the two artists are not strong enough to posit a development from Nadelman. Charlot's work could as easily be connected to Modigliani's, although I have no evidence that he knew that artist's work during this period. In the end, Charlot's style seems to be his personal contribution to the stylistic ferment of the early war period, in which curious similarities can be found in unexpected places. In any case, his own accomplishments in the style were exhibited publicly in 1917 and 1920.

After the Rondels, Charlot made ten designs of images for woven cloth and four large mock-ups—the maximum dimensions are 26" by 20"—using eight of the images as a repeating pattern. The mock-ups were in all likelihood the designs for cloth exhibited with the galloons in early 1917. *Jesus Being Succored by Angels after the Temptation in the Desert* is dated "17," and the ten designs were placed early in a folded paper dated "1917." Charlot therefore must have suspended his work in cloth for a number of months after the Rondels, perhaps while he was concentrating on his bas-reliefs. The drawings vary somewhat in the size of the sheet, but are uniform in scale. The squared sheets are of the same stock. The drawings have been made carefully: a preliminary light pencil drawing has been covered by the final line in blue or black ink and, in two cases, by a heavier pencil line. The final lines have been indented in the process of tracing the images several times onto the mock-up sheets; the two images from which no mock-up survives have also been traced. The images on the mock-ups are, therefore, the same size as in the designs. Charlot again was designing in the intended scale. Each mock-up is a large sheet of stiff,

heavy paper, on which two alternating images have been traced several times and colored in gouache. The mock-up is thus made to resemble a large section of cloth. Glue marks on the backs of the mock-ups indicate that they have been mounted for display.

The subjects are all biblical and are being used symbolically. Discussing the use of the skeleton in a 1916 print (Morse number 2; Morse 1976: 4), Charlot stated, “I used the same sort of symbolic ideas on designs for religious vestments, done about the same time.” Such religious symbolism is meant for meditation and is thus suggestive rather than discursive, but a few primary meanings can be discerned. The pairing on one mock-up of *The Multiplication of Loaves* and *The Wedding at Cana* is a clear reference to the consecrated bread and wine at Mass; indeed, the passage of a disciple distributing bread to two kneeling members of the crowd uses the gestures of Holy Communion. The pairing of *The Meeting of Ann and Joachim* and *Two Scenes with Old Testament Prophets* emphasizes God’s wondrous providential care. Charlot loved the former subject and particularly appreciated Giotto’s treatment of it, on which Charlot seems to have based his own design. *Joseph’s Bloody Cloak* and *Jesus Being Succored by Angels after the Temptation in the Desert* both take place in the desert, but Joseph’s brothers succumbed to temptation there, while Jesus resisted it. Moreover, the latter subject has a positive outcome whereas the former seems negative at this point of the story. Joseph’s rescue will, however, provide an antetype of Jesus’ Resurrection, so the Old Testament story can be understood only in the light of the New Testament one. The problem of death was prominent during the war, and artists invoked a number of biblical archetypes to treat it, especially fratricidal ones like the story of Cain and Abel; the story of Joseph and his brothers is equally appropriate. Death and Resurrection are also the themes of the pair *L’ange apporte la palme à Marie agonisante* and *The Grapes of Canaan*; as Mary dies, she receives the emblem of Paradise, just as the grapes indicated the wealth of the Promised Land to the wandering Israelites. This pair may have replaced the two for which no mock-up exists and that are symbolizing the same themes: *Jonah Emerging from the Whale*, another antetype of the Resurrection, and an esoteric image that appears to be Jesus receiving the body and the separated soul of Mary into heaven. The former may have been too obvious a symbol for Charlot, and the latter, too esoteric on reflection. I have suggested only some of the possible interpretations of Charlot’s symbols, which he is clearly using to stimulate meditation, especially in his untraditional pairings, which demand reflection.

The symbolism of the images is extended by the fact that they are not mere heraldic emblems (indeed, Charlot may have rejected his Jonah image because it was too schematic for the effect he was seeking); they are narrative images involving a number of characters, each one of whom plays a distinct role. As in the Rondels, Charlot uses gesture and posture expertly to narrate his stories and communicate their wide range of emotions. The clarity of the compositions makes the images immediately intelligible, realizing the ideal he expressed in “Nous les Jeunes !” He has obviously learned from such artists as Giotto and Ghiberti how to depict several narrative incidents within a small physical space; he has also adapted their miniature scenic architecture and schematic plants and accouterments to turn that small space into a little world.

As with the Rondels, Charlot uses a geometric shape—in this case, a rectangle—as the basis of his compositions. The corners are always indicated on the squared sheets, and the sides of the rectangle

are usually indicated in light pencil (in the one case in which they are missing, I believe they have been trimmed). I would guess that Charlot worked with increasing freedom within the rectangle, cutting spaces into it and pushing elements beyond it. That is, I would place the more rectangular designs early—such as *The Reception of Mary in Heaven* (?) and *L'ange apporte la palme à Marie agonisante*—and the freest late—such as *Jesus Being Succored* and *Two Scenes with Old Testament Prophets*. This placing is supported by the greater simplicity and security of the drawing in the last two, and by the resemblance of the kneeling figures in *L'ange apporte la palme* to the stockier ones in the Rondels.

As in the Rondels, the forms are drawn in outlined areas to be filled with color. The curved lines dominate with straight ones providing contrast. The lines create the individual compositions very clearly and establish harmonious parallels and contrasts among themselves. The forms have been simplified into smooth geometric shapes, and Charlot has also elongated his figures, especially the divine, angelic, or saintly ones; this tendency can be connected to his comments on elongation in the contemporary “Nous les Jeunes !” The parts of the compositions achieve an interrelated flow, and all Charlot’s changes from his initial to his final lines reinforce the effect. For instance, in *Two Scenes with Old Testament Prophets*, he originally had the angel’s hand angled up from his wrist in order to support better the person he is carrying; he then straightened the hand so that it lengthened the curving line of the arm. The stylistic result of the above characteristics is to heighten the anticipation of art deco. The impression is, however, more serious and emotional than the usual art deco painting.

In the mock-ups, between the alternating images, Charlot left large expanses of unadorned cloth, the color of which he used in the images as a reserve. Only two further colors are added, resulting in strong, unnaturalistic effects. For instance, in the mock-up with *Joseph’s Cloak* and *Jesus Being Succored*, the skins of all the figures are the same black. Moreover, the color combinations are unusual: white, gray, and red; brown, dark purple, and light blue; maroon, yellow, and black; green, black, and pink. In the last, the small pink areas pop out against the larger black ones and the broad expanse of dark green. The light blue is almost psychedelic against the purple and brown. Charlot’s use of color in these designs is as unconventional as his drawing is innovative. A contemporary pencil and wash drawing, *Plants*, which Charlot noted had the “Same style as liturgical cloths,” displays a similar contrast between strongly and lightly colored areas.¹⁴⁸

After Charlot exhibited his designs for galloons and woven cloth in early 1917, he went into the army and turned to other media. However, in 1920 he again turned to textile design and exhibited *Trois projets pour tissus liturgiques* ‘three projects for liturgical cloth’ at the *Exposition d’Art Chrétien Moderne* of December 1920 to January 1921. I will discuss these designs in chapter 8.

Two undated drawings in the Jean Charlot Collection—although difficult to place—belong, I believe, to Charlot’s 1917 work before he entered the army. They are connected to the works discussed above either in style or subject matter, but are larger. Along with *Haloed Woman with Deer*, discussed below, they indicate that Charlot at the end of this period was starting to work on a larger scale, thereby exploiting the monumentality already evident in the smaller works.

The first is *grand coussin*,¹⁴⁹ a (non-avant-garde) Neoclassical decoration. Charlot will experiment with a similar style after the war, but the drawing of *grand coussin* is unusually tentative, unlike the assured lines in the drawings that can be dated later. The lines are also less secure than those found in the smaller drawings described above, a result probably of the expansion of scale. The writing on the drawing identifies it as a design for cloth, but the subject does not appear liturgical.

Crains le grand bond [word illegible] *des chiens de guerre* is more closely related in style to the 1917 cloth designs: accompanied by two hunting dogs, two men carry on a long shoulder-pole a dead sheep.¹⁵⁰ The drawing is based on the composition of the 1917 *Grapes of Canaan*; the lines are as curved as Charlot's 1917 designs and have not received the stiffening he imposed on his postwar figures. However, Charlot has developed his earlier 1917 style with a further elongation of the figures, more analysis of the forms within the outlines,¹⁵¹ and a great enlargement of the scale. That scale would be awkward on a garment, so Charlot was probably thinking of another medium. The greater scale may be the cause of a slight unsteadiness in the lines, although they are steadier than those of *grand coussin*. Although not overtly liturgical, the image might symbolize the times: the Lamb of God hunted to death by the Hounds of War. The inscription is more appropriate to 1917 than the postwar period. The script does, however, resemble that used in 1919 for *La Virginité*, *La Luxure*, and *L'Aumône*. The drawing is among the most impressive of this period and reveals the direction Charlot would have taken if he had not been inducted.

5.6.3. POLYCHROMED WOOD BAS-RELIEFS

The importance of muralism for Charlot during this period is seen in the fact that he used it as a basis for criticizing other artists and as the criterion of his selection of influences. In Paris, Charlot's own muralism would culminate in his major project for a mural in a parish church. But his active muralism began with his work on monumental wooden bas-reliefs; he in fact mentions "le bois polychromé" 'polychromed wood' along with two other mural media, "la peinture à la fresque, la peinture à la colle" 'fresco painting, glue painting' in "Nous les Jeunes !" The few sketches and photographs that survive of this work show that it was designed on an architectural scale, although it might not always have been affixed to a wall.

The bas-reliefs are in the first style that Charlot based on a folk or indigenous tradition. Charlot was flattered when the liturgical art promoter Dom Besse, on seeing one of his bas-reliefs, took him for a Breton:

"Oh well, I see that you are a Breton. You just arrived in Paris. Well, it's all right, it's all right. I think you have a nice innocence and so on, just go on doing what you are doing." That was the words of wisdom of Dom Besse. I was, of course, too awed by him to tell him I wasn't really a Breton. But I was rather pleased, and I understood that he was in a way rather pleased, so of course he thought I was, so to speak, one of the folks out of the masses. But it shows, really, that there was a genuine quality that

I had learned from the Breton folk artists, and for me it placed my sculpture in a certain perspective which I hadn't had up to then.¹⁵²

In this Breton-influenced liturgical style, the figures were stocky, as will be seen below:

I made also sculptures, wood carvings, that were done directly in blocks of wood, and I used again, simply, chisel and hammer. And, of course, I had gone to Brittany, and in Brittany I was impressed by the what we would call now the *Santos* in relation to New Mexico, the devotional stone carvings and wood carvings that you find in the little Brittany churches, which correspond again to the Images d'Epinal, but this time in three dimensions... I had, myself, a similar contact, and I would say similar reaction, and it is a parallel with Gauguin. I had known before the pre-Hispanic primitive forms, and I recognize in the stone sculpture, wood sculptures of the wood and stone carvers of Brittany, something similar and a marvelous, humble religiosity, I would say, without pride. So maybe even though I was doing at the same time the *Way of the Cross* and the wood sculptures, the wood sculptures are nearly something to atone for that elongation that still bothers me today in the *Way of the Cross*, in the woodcuts, and they were much closer to the Breton folk sculpture.¹⁵³

The style of the bas-reliefs was thus an anticipation of the one Charlot would develop after he went through a different period of liturgical art:

At that time [1976], [Charlot] commented to the writer that the wood carvings he had observed and that he began to do himself in Brittany had a great deal to do with the forms that he would later use in his painting. Throughout his career, the figures had the quality of being sculptural. (Burnett 1979: 1-E)

Moreover, the method of production was artisanal: "sculptures, wood carvings, that were done directly in blocks of wood, and I used again, simply, chisel and hammer" (Interview November 6, 1970). As seen above, "that idea of manual labor being an integral part of the arts has been one of my major, I would say, acts of faith" (Interview October 7, 1970). Indeed, the work on the bas-reliefs accorded with Charlot's view that the physical creation of a work of art was itself meritorious: "A wooden statue that would exhibit the facets made by the axe in the carving process would have the virtue of humbleness, of truthfulness that would make it a virtuous act" (Summer 1951). In the only surviving panel, the faceting of the surface makes an essential contribution to its overall effect. Charlot has sacrificed his expertise in brushwork, but his wood carving was immediately masterful in the medieval sense. Indeed, Charlot was realizing his medieval ideal:

And at the same time, I was, for example, carving wood, doing wood sculpture, direct carving, and I had my mallet and chisel and so on, different knives. I was doing that in Saint Mandé, in the backyard of our house, and the neighbors complained a little bit of the noise. So I remember that I had to wrap up my mallet in cloth so that the noise wouldn't be such as to annoy the people; it made it a little more difficult, but I

would really work far into the night with that idea that I was an artisan. The dreams, I would say, that I had at the time were very young. I remember that my idea was when I would be very old, when I would be around sixty, I would retire from the world and have a little shop for wood carving between the buttresses at the back of the *chevet* of one of the cathedrals. It was one of my ideals of the time. Well, of course those things are not to be realized later on as one gets into a more adult point of view, but nevertheless they color the life and the vocation of a man. I don't think it was all idleness. (Interview October 7, 1970)

Charlot told me that at this time, he seriously considered being primarily a sculptor rather than a painter, as seen in the quotation below. Although he returned to sculpture only later in life, his painting itself always had a sculptural quality.¹⁵⁴

Charlot enjoyed some success with his bas-reliefs. He remembered that his wood sculpture “also received some medals, awards, and even sales”:

I sold all the sculptures I made to a collector in Paris, but he didn't need the wings, so I kept the wings. Then later on that fellow very nicely invited me, and I went to see him. There was a rather grand Paris apartment, and my things looked, I must say, very well. He had a collection of other modern people, and it made me feel a little bit like a professional, going to visit with somebody who had paid good money for my work. Unhappily I don't have the name of the man, otherwise I would have liked very much to ask a loan of those sculptures for my retrospectives, both the one I had here at the Academy and the one I had in Mexico. (Interview November 6, 1970)

Charlot's carvings were so successful that he could think of them as an alternative career:

those things actually went well, if you want, from a financial point of view. I showed at the Pavillon Marsan—that was the Decorative Arts—got, as you say, sort of a medal and recognition. And every one of these sculptures, really, that I did—they were direct carved wood and polychromed—sold and, I think, sold for a good price at the time. That is, I perhaps was on my way to make a living with my art. I think it would have been probably the direct carving rather than the painting that would have become my career then. (Interview October 18, 1970)

Unfortunately, less survives of this important period of Charlot's work than of any other. His sketchbook from Brittany is missing, and little evidence remains of the number of bas-reliefs that Charlot implies were completed.

Perhaps the earliest recorded work—and one Charlot completed—was the “little sculpture” that he showed to Dom Besse: “I made a panel which represented the Visitation—Mary and her cousin Elizabeth and the dog barking and so on, so forth” (Interview November 6, 1970). A black and white photograph of the panel was sent to Charlot by Odette.¹⁵⁵ The composition is based on that of the Rondel of the Visitation and does not fit its new rectangular space as well: the hems of the two women's robes no

longer have a circular base to describe and the space between the figures and the side edges is awkwardly filled. The panel may be Charlot's very first effort in the new medium. *The Visitation* has been photographed mounted on a wall, perhaps at the Gilde exhibition of 1917. A sticker shows the price: "19 F."

The panel comprises two sections: a slightly vertical rectangle surmounted by an arched panel. The proportions can be measured in the preparatory gouache of the matching *Christ Carrying His Cross*, discussed below: the rectangle 5-1/4" high by 4-3/4" wide is surmounted by a rounded arch 2-1/4" high. If the wood was from the same stockpile as *Haloed Woman with Deer*, discussed below, the actual width was 48-1/2 centimeters. The design is architectural—a facade with a pediment—and this impression is supported by the framing of the sides of the rectangle with columns, while above the bottom edge, a surface has been cut in that resembles flooring planks in perspective, as if the scene were being played upon a stage. The arch is designed as an upside-down swag, and the pediment is occupied by a basket of fruit, flowers, and leaves. The panel resembles in many ways Charlot's childhood puppet theatre.

From the photograph, the panel seems to consist of two planks that have been joined: the vertical seam is slightly off-center between the two heads of the figures (perhaps influencing the composition). *Haloed Woman with Deer*, discussed below, is constructed the same way, and Charlot may have had a set of such pieces at his disposal. The edges around the rectangle mark the surface of the plank, and the swag-arch forms a medium level: higher than the panel surfaces but carved down from the plank's original surface, unlike the rectangle edges. That the rectangle edges were felt to serve as a frame is shown from the fact that a price sticker has been affixed to the left vertical one in the photograph. The chisel marks are evident and considerably varied, from large and crude to fine and graceful. The paint has been applied thick and flat, leaving modeling to the carving.

This first bas-relief is consciously based on folk art. The figures seem a little stiff and crude, and the plants and animals are out of perspective and proportion. In the black-and-white photograph, the coloring looks vivid with strong tonal contrasts. The sophistication of the artist is, however, indicated by the lively and prominent dog—already in the *Rondel*—which is a reference to the one in Giotto's *Joachim Retired to the Sheepfold* (Arena Chapel, Padua, ca. 1310); a dog that Giotto's contemporaries, Charlot told me, found startlingly realistic. Odette told me that Charlot's dog made a lively impression on the viewer. Charlot—if not Giotto—was making the point that highest intellectual art is compatible with the closest observation and simplest emotion. The bas-relief has all the tenderness of the *Rondel*.

Charlot has connected the panels visually by developing a series of upturning circular segments to oppose the arch of the pediment: one at the figures' feet, another at their knees, and a third formed by their merged haloes. Moreover, the lines formed by the plants in the pediment echo with exaggeration the compositional lines in the rectangle below. The spaces behind the figures, however, seem either underfilled (on the viewer's left) or filled meaninglessly (on the viewer's right). As a result, the rectangle seems insufficiently strong to support the well-filled pediment. Color may have been used to correct this impression.

The later bas-relief project, *Christ Carrying His Cross, with rich border*,¹⁵⁶ provides now the best idea of the effect Charlot was intending. Charlot dated the project early, although not among his earliest. It is in the same format as the *Visitation* bas-relief and its composition is also based on that of the earlier Rondel of the same subject. Evidently, Charlot was planning a series of portable bas-reliefs on the Mysteries of the Rosary that would have corresponded to the Rondels. Although the physical bas-relief was small, the design sketched in the preparatory gouache appears monumental and could easily be projected to mural scale. *Christ Carrying His Cross* is a clear advance over the *Visitation* in fitting its composition into the new format.

The composition is very geometric, using the angles of the cross as Charlot will later in his *Chemin de Croix*; indeed the fifth, seventh, and ninth stations (Morse 1976: numbers 16, 18, 20) will draw elements from this composition. The original Rondel composition was designed to be seen properly as the Rondel was rotated. Charlot has now stabilized the composition within the rectangle by two devices: (1) Veronica's feet touch the planks of the "stage" at the bottom of the rectangle; and (2) the leaning woman at the left top edge of the Rondel has been changed into a vertical rock with a tree growing from it, and the hills at the right edge of the Rondel have been straightened into verticals. The figures are stockier than in Charlot's later liturgical work. The kneeling Veronica, seen from the back, is particularly sturdy in her peasant dress. The squat, muscular soldiers do not, therefore, present a contrast with spiritually attenuated people, as they do in the *Chemin de Croix*.

The gouache communicates a strong impression of the woodiness of the surface, a result of Charlot's skill at depicting textures with a brush. The fruit and flowers are clearly stylized to fit the medium. The coloring is bold, with strong reds and purples and brilliant yellows (which may have been intended for gold leaf). The coloring is not realistic, but serves to heighten the impact of the message: for instance, the soldiers are done in almost monochrome dark browns, while Christ's white skin is the color highlight of the image. The coloring, however, is not designed in flat areas. If the colors were to be applied in as painterly a fashion as indicated by the gouache, they would have played an equal role with the carving. That is, Charlot is exploiting possibilities in polychromed wood that go beyond those in textiles. The final effect is both striking and sumptuous.

Charlot also completed an altar piece with at least four panels: two angels, each of which had a panel for the body and another for the wings. The finished body panels were exhibited by early 1916 and photographed with Charlot and the two Gildeuses. The buyer of the completed work did not want the two wing panels, so they were kept by Odette in her Paris apartment, where I saw them, and were passed down to her daughter, Arlette Menêt: "What she has are the wings of the angels that were to be on both sides of an altar piece" (Interview November 6, 1970). Unfortunately, in a fit of good taste, Arlette had the color removed from these. The panels were not, however, among the artworks Arlette left to David Charlot, and their present location is unknown. I remember their fine, even carving and vivid colors: red, green, and gilt.

A preparatory drawing survives for the body of the angel on the left, as well as a contemporary photograph.¹⁵⁷ The overall design is recorded in *Sketch of a Multi-Panel Altar Piece*.¹⁵⁸ The two angels

kneel in worship facing the tabernacle; the top line of the rectangle of their panels meets the top of the tabernacle. Above the tabernacle and continuing its vertical lines is an image that may be in another medium, say, sculpture in the round to correspond to the bulge of the tabernacle. To either side of this central object are panels for the extended wings of the angels; the curving tops of these panels continue through the middle section to create an arching top for the whole composition, just as in *Christ Carrying His Cross*. The presentation of the whole ensemble is, therefore, clearly architectural.

The composition is again geometric, as clear from the numerical calculations on the verso of the *Sketch*. The *Sketch* records that the lower line of the bodies of the kneeling angels was intended to help create an arch that corresponded on a smaller scale to that of the whole set of panels. The smaller arch set below the larger one created a tunnel of space for the whole ensemble. The photograph of the left angel displays the apparent chisel work and schematizing of forms that mark this period of Charlot's art. The edge of the panel is clearly marked with a ridge; that is, its character as an individual plank is recognized before it takes its place in the ensemble. The strongest color in the sketch is the red of the tabernacle; except for strong colors on the flowers and the halos and light rays—probably indicating gold leaf—the coloring of the angels and background is done in light washes. However, this was changed in the execution: the coloring of the surviving wings was brilliant. In comparison with *Christ Carrying the Cross*, the coloring was flatter inside the outlines. I remember it being monochrome with any variation being provided solely by the three-dimensionality of the carved surface. The use of color in this work is thus similar to that in the liturgical cloths with which Charlot was also occupied: the cloths limited Charlot to flat colors within outlined areas.

The only surviving panel is the large *Haloed Woman with Deer*.¹⁵⁹ Since the panel is unfinished, Charlot probably began it after he exhibited the other works and abandoned it when he was drafted into the army; I would, therefore, date it to early 1917. The subject may be a saint—Charlot will depict St. Catherine of Alexandria with a deer in his 1920 mural project *Processional*—but because of the nudity of the woman, is more likely an allegorical figure like Charlot's 1919 *La Virginité*, with its similar deer.

The panel is composed of two planks that had been joined long before Charlot began working on them and were probably taken from an old piece of furniture. The flat, uncarved face of the woman and the flower remain from the front surface of the panel. Whether Charlot shaped the arch at the top or whether it was part of the original panel is unclear. If the plank is from the same stockpile as *Visitation*, the arch was probably the original shape and an influence on the composition. For this work, however, Charlot has not shortened the bottom rectangle but left it in its possibly original length, an indication of his desire to work on a larger scale. The format is, therefore, a variation of that of *Visitation* and *Christ Carrying His Cross*.

The unfinished state of the panel permits a study of some of Charlot's work methods, which I attempt to reconstruct. The top section of the panel is unworked, but shallow engraved lines indicate the planned shape. Charlot may have outlined the general figures for the whole panel with such lines, similar to the incised lines he would later use in fresco. A series of horizontal lines, shallow but finished, has been chiseled along the edge on the viewer's right and the arched top to form a border like the edge of a

minted coin. Although the side on the viewer's left has not been worked, the pictorial area is defined with sufficient clarity. The untouched face and flower indicate that Charlot worked by area, rather than overall, perhaps leaving the finest carving for later. The carving is so deep as to threaten the back of the panel. Indeed, Charlot seems to have decided to increase the depth of his carving as he progressed. A shallower background level above the back of the figure seems to be in the process of being carved down to match the deeper background along the body. Charlot's intention seems to be to increase the bulkiness of the figure; he is pushing the three-dimensionality of the panel.

As in the panel of angels' wings discussed above, Charlot's faceting is apparent; he does not sand away the chisel strokes. The effect is, however, not Impressionistic or ill-defined because the strokes of a given area are even, generally sharing the same size and direction. That is, Charlot uses similar chisel strokes as he earlier used similar pencil strokes. The apparent strokes realize the character of the medium—carved wood as opposed to an oil painting on a wooden plank—and remain true to the roughness of the folk genre. But Charlot's control of the strokes enables him to define his areas and thus to create a clear image and composition. Charlot joins the strengths of the medium and genre to his own classical vision, a *modus operandi* Charlot would develop throughout his life.

The clarity of the image and composition would have been supported by the color, which Charlot certainly intended to be vivid. The outlined swags at the top of the panel suggest a coloring like that of *Christ Carrying His Cross, with rich border*. The furrowed border of the panel would in all likelihood have been given its own coloring, as has the border of the panels of angels' wings.

The figure of the woman is emphatically bulky. Deep carving describes the roll of her stomach and fleshy shank, and the placing of her hands and the deer's head accentuates her three-dimensional effect. The figure is closer to Charlot's Beaux-Arts study "Studio Female Nude" than to the attenuated spiritualized bodies found in his later *La Virginité* and *Chemin de Croix*. The difference is due at least partially to the medium and Breton influence. In addition, depending on dating, the relief is also an indication that Charlot had not yet developed the elongated style that would soon dominate his work or else was working in alternative styles. He would later return to bulk in developing a new style and sensibility in Mexico. Finally, the figure's bulk anticipates Charlot's much later work in three-dimensional sculpture.

The bulk of the woman's body is an important element on one level of the composition: it creates a three-dimensional column that pushes upwards with shoulders and back towards the viewer's right. The line thus created is countered by a surface diagonal passing in the opposite direction through the figure's face and the flower. This X of crossing straight diagonals is coordinated with another compositional level formed by curves. At the top of the panel are three small geometric curves formed by swags. At the bottom is a more complicated set of small curves formed by the legs of the deer. The middle of the panel is occupied by two large, opposing S curves. The first is a reversed S with an extended midsection; it starts at the head at the viewer's left, proceeds down the shoulder and arm (with the extension) to the head and sinuous neck of the deer, down its back and around its hindquarters, and into the variations of the legs. A second, facing S proceeds up the right leg and knee of the deer, touches

the projecting nick of the figure's hair and the ray on the viewer's left, and follows around the figure's right hand. As in his later work, Charlot is composing with lines imbedded in the middle of volumes, with surface outlines of forms, and with mental connections across space to physically disconnected elements. His coloring would have supported and varied this composition.

Working with large wooden panels must have prepared Charlot to move beyond small woodcuts to the unusually large ones of the *Chemin de Croix*. Indeed, Charlot's preparatory designs for further woodcuts—especially those with the colors indicated by washes, like the two of Joan of Arc—could easily be used for bas-reliefs. The fact that Charlot could adapt his designs to different media shows that the same monumental spirit animates them, from the small *galons* to the large bas-reliefs.

5.6.4. PRINTMAKING

Charlot was familiar with the full range of printmaking in his liturgical period, from the enormous, commercial industry to the high art prints that had been produced increasingly since the late nineteenth century. Characteristically, he reacted against the art prints of the Nabis and gravitated towards popular printmaking, both in his collecting and his creating; his lifelong preferences are evident from the very beginning:

One of the things that guided me through life is that I don't like "art." That is, I don't like "art for art." What I am trying to do—tried even before I went to Mexico—is art for *people*. That's why I like the Images d'Epinal so much, the Guadalupe Posadas, penny-sheets, pilgrimage sheets, and what-not. Also, I meant to react against the "art" lithographs, such as those done by the Nabis: Bonnard, Vuillard, Maurice Denis. Granted that they are beautiful, they are such obvious works of art.¹⁶⁰

Charlot's first two pictorial prints—Christ's head at the Crucifixion and a portrayal of the sinner as a skeleton—were intended to be easily available devotional images: "I wanted to make a repeated image that could be sold" (Morse 1976: 3; numbers 1, 2). Like Marguerite Huré, he was making woodblock prints in a rough and heavy style. In Charlot's case, this style arose partially from his using a simple knife and lids from cigar boxes, wood surfaces cut along the grain or *bois de fil* (Morse 1976: 6; Tabletalk February 12, 1972). Speaking of his later *Chemin de Croix*, Charlot stated:

There were rather large planks of wood for woodcuts the way I was doing them, that is, with the *bois de fil*. You know, there are the two kinds of wood. One that you cut with the grain, which is the way the Japanese do their cuts and some of the old Images d'Epinal, and then there is the one that cuts against the grain, which can give a very hard surface that can be worked out with the same engraver's tools that you work on metal. But what I wanted to do was *bois de fil*. I mentioned before that I was interested in the popular Images d'Epinal, and I mentioned, I think, something about Japanese prints that I had seen in the Camondo Collection in the Louvre, and all those things were on *bois de fil*, and I wanted to do something similar. One of the reasons is

just that you use a knife, and there is no need of complicated tools. (Interview November 6, 1970)

Charlot was developing a print style that was appropriate to the medium and, therefore, different from the style he used for cloth. Charlot's use of a knife or penknife rather than a burin was the practice also of the Nabi Félix Vallotton in his unusually strong prints. Charlot, in his later *Chemin de Croix*, will use blocks of soft pear wood, which were again the material preferred by Vallotton (Frèches-Thory and Terrasse 1991: 242). Perhaps as a result, Vallotton's style, which emphasized large sinuous black areas, is the only one in which resemblances can be found to some of Charlot's later prints.

Charlot's stylistic roughness in his first prints arose also, I believe, from his study of popular devotional art, on which he in fact bases his two images. Both subjects are related to death, a preoccupation in wartime. Christ's crucifixion reveals that death is a prelude to Resurrection, as seen in several subjects of Charlot's cloth designs. The skeletal *memento mori* is called *Le pécheur* 'The Sinner,' a reminder that spiritual death is graver even than physical.

Charlot approached his first print with great seriousness and kept examples from the stages of its creation. This is the first instance of a practice he will follow later in life: carefully preserving the stages of his printmaking. The preparation for the print is found in three drawings done on rough squares of paper, cut from Henri Charlot's stationary at roughly the size of the woodblock.¹⁶¹ Charlot first drew the model, "probably a Spanish sculpture" (Morse 1976: 3), in pencil and then made the final lines in pen and black ink. Dark areas are indicated by parallel vertical lines. This careful drawing is the same size and scale as the final print; and provides a clear baseline for the next stages of Charlot's creative process. The main lines of the first drawing were now traced onto another sheet and over-painted in blue wash. At this stage, Charlot intended to eliminate the differences in tone of the ink drawing and reduce the details; for instance, Christ's eyes are now completely in shadow. This painting is clearly intended to be made into a woodblock print. Charlot then traced this image in pencil with further simplification onto a third sheet, filling in the dark areas with thin pencil strokes; this is not a drawing done for its own sake—the pencil in-filling is really a substitute for wash—but a tool in a process. This last drawing was traced onto the block.

Nine stages of Charlot's work with the block were numbered and preserved by him, and have been described by Morse (Charlot later labeled one print "7-1/2", indicating that it fit between his earlier numbers 7 and 8). Charlot was feeling his way with his first pictorial print and felt that the record of his exploration was worth keeping. Charlot was in fact developing the image from his very first work on the block itself; the first print has simplified the traced drawing and elongated the figure. Indeed, the original model recorded in the first drawing is now hard to recognize. Since a woodblock image is made by carving into the block, the development of a print can move only from darker to lighter; that is, more lines of light are added, diminishing the dark printed areas. Charlot lightened the image of Christ and modified its outline. He also cut increasingly into the solid black background to depict light rays emanating from Christ's head. This last development may have been suggested by the unavoidable light lines that result from printing on *bois de fil*, wood cut along the grain. That is, Charlot's woodblock did not print *solid*

black—as planned in the blue wash—but *predominantly* black, while thin horizontal lines were left unprinted. Charlot’s work on the background exploits these lines, increasing always the texture of the background. In sum, Charlot was learning from the actual experience of working with the block. Charlot also varied the printing of the block, using different watercolors and modulating the pressure on different areas, even to the extent of leaving some unprinted. For instance, in a signed printing of the final state, Christ’s head has been printed with more pressure than his chest or the background, and the bottom two corners have been left unprinted. The creation of this print was clearly an important learning experience for Charlot. The final product is weakened, in my opinion, by the fact that he started from an artwork rather than developing his own image.

Charlot’s next print, *Skeleton/Le pêcheur* (Morse 2) was also based on a sculpture, probably late medieval, and had the advantage of being easily recognizable. Charlot remembered the symbolism clearly (Morse 1976: 4): “I had been digging up all sorts of symbols, so I used the skeleton as a symbol of the spiritual death of the sinner.” The symbol is traditional, but Charlot felt it keenly, as seen in the passages from his personal poems discussed above. In the more formalized *Du péché, de la sanction, Retour de l’âme à Dieu, Ses conditions*, finished in January 1917, the sinner speaks:

“Déjà la main lève le voile virginal, et voici : Je démasque le rictus grotesque de la Mort !

Cabrée au joug du maître, ma chair s’offre, docile [variante : servile] aux vers . . .

Fruit dérisoire aux lèvres lasses des lutteurs affrontés. O ! Retourne, Sers en échange du pain ! Mais sans mains et sans yeux, que suis-je, Daignera-t-il prendre acte de ma charogne vive.”

‘Already the hand lifts the virginal veil, and here: I unmask the grotesque rictus of Death!

Bent under the yoke of the master, my flesh offers itself docile [alternative: servile] to the worms. . . Derisory fruit at the tired lips of affronted strugglers. Oh, return, serve in exchange for bread! But without hands and without eyes, what am I. Will he deign to take cognizance of my living carcass?’

The fact that the print underwent only two contemporary states shows that Charlot knew better what he wanted to do and how to do it. A special characteristic of this print is that it was designed to be hand-colored, a practice Charlot had learned from the Images d’Epinal. Charlot was using the devices of folk art to appeal to the broader Christian community. Also, as in his cloth designs, he was planning for his design to be realized at least in part by others; that is, he was rejecting the importance of the autograph. His own weird hand-coloring of the print, however, adds considerably to its horror.

Charlot’s third print, his ex libris with his name and address (Morse number 3), is his first color print: his name and address have been printed in green with one block, and the image of a candle and books in blue with another. Moreover, the grain of the former block is vertical and that of the latter horizontal. Charlot’s lettering differs markedly from the cursive style Huré used on her own ex libris. Charlot emphasizes the hardness of the wood, the way it resists the knife and forces it to simplify the

forms and roughen their edges. These difficulties largely disappear in the image, which shows they were deliberately evoked in the lettering for effect. The image itself is a complicated, even witty, study in light and shade, another example of Charlot achieving complex compositions in small spaces. In the context of the whole ex libris, the lighter part of the image balances the heavier lettering; the darker part, the lighter. In this print, Charlot has achieved his ideal of creating an apparently simple image by complicated means.

Charlot had been interested in color printing since his childhood. From this period, he remembered being impressed by an early process print of Correggio's *Madonna del San Girolamo* that his mother brought back with her from a trip to Parma with the choir of the Gilde and its director d'Indy:

Well, again I don't have a sharp memory of things. I just know that she went with my sister, and I was a little jealous that my sister would go and I would stay. And it was, I think, a musical group. My mother and perhaps at the time my sister were part of that choir who was to sing. I think the master musician was Vincent d'Indy, and they were invited to go and sing somewhere in Italy. And of course, my mother and sister went there, and they obviously stayed in Parma, which was the place where there were some rather beautiful pictures—Correggio was one of the people that was represented in Parma—and they brought back color reproductions.

Well, at the time there were not so many color reproductions, and she brought in some reproductions in full color, which seems to me a marvelous affair. (Interview October 31, 1970)

Charlot remembered also another source:

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...it was a first visual experience with color separations. (Morse 1976: 88)

Charlot did not, however, admire the art prints in color of Maurice Denis and others, who made the print look as much as possible like a drawing by leaving a good deal of the paper unprinted.¹⁶²

Characteristically, Charlot was drawn to the less arty chromolithographs of the time, lithographs in full color that covered the sheet. Although the word is perfectly clear, it became so associated with commercial printing and with oleographs—chromolithographs varnished to look like oils—that it was avoided in art circles; the designer Merle Armitage and the printer Lynton Kistler had to plead with Charlot not to use the word in the title of his book of lithographs, *Picture Book* of 1933 (Tabletalk February 12, 1972). Charlot's attitude in this is similar to his partiality for tone blocks, wood engravings or *bois de bout*: prints engraved on the butt-end of wood blocks, against the grain rather than with it. Again, wood engraving had fallen out of artistic fashion because it had been much used in commercial work—which Charlot knew well—but Charlot always felt positively about the medium and in 1930 engraved in *bois de bout* two self-portraits (Morse 106, 107).

5.6.5. MISCELLANEOUS

Charlot continued his earlier work in portraits and landscapes, usually at a matured level of his preliturgical style. Two small pencil portraits of his former wet nurse and her husband, *Le père Le Nohan* and *Madame Le Nohan*, were done during a visit to them in July 1916.

had been wet nurse. Le père Nohan = her husband. They lived near Poissy. Kept contact with them. Ca. 1916, between the declaration of war and going to war. Did both drawings at the same time. Relationship with the family. Didn't visit them a lot, but stayed with them a few days on one occasion. The drawings were probably done at that time.¹⁶³

Mrs. Le Nohan inclines her head over her work, as had Charlot's other peasant models. The old couple are quiet and dignified, and Charlot knows them well.

This visit is probably the occasion of a small landscape, *Village and Field*, dated July 1916, which shows some development in composition and execution.¹⁶⁴ The horizontal expanse is communicated through the field in the foreground, the gray sky in the background, and the large blank wall of a building on the right. The painting is sparer than Charlot's earlier landscapes, but complete in itself. Despite this, the elements have been described with a painterly freedom. The visible brushstrokes of Charlot's washes in the field do not describe objects or even levels; they do not convey a smooth atmospheric regression; and yet they fit convincingly into the picture. Other brushstrokes vary easily according to the objects represented. Charlot was perfectly assured in this genre at this stage of his life, and his eye, mind, and hand were advancing in a smooth development.

Charlot was also experimenting with styles different from those he developed for his liturgical art, as seen in a sequence of works. The first, I argue, is a pencil portrait of Louis Goupil,¹⁶⁵ the most important individual model for Charlot during this period. Goupil is dressed in the same clothes he is wearing in *Louis Goupil Seated in Jean Charlot's Bedroom*, which I have dated to late 1915 or early 1916. The drawing is a careful portrait, and Charlot has accented the sacks under Goupil's eyes, which form a rough circle with the eyebrows. Strong lines separate the mouth and beard into an area separate from the cheeks; the lines between the areas are not, however, entirely closed. Charlot is looking at the face and beginning to analyze it into related areas. This drawing is, I argue, the basis of a stylized portrait in pencil and wash, which Charlot tentatively dated 1916.¹⁶⁶ The lines between the areas are now fully closed, and the areas themselves are treated almost flat. A color or a reserve is enclosed within each area and thus serves to contrast them, rather than providing a transition between them. The cheeks have now been turned into areas and colored a bright pink. The area constructed from the nose continues up between the eyes and closes itself at the base of the forehead, contributing to an unrealistic area-enclosing line across the top of the eyebrows. The head is portrayed in three dimensions, and the shadows on either side have been turned into areas, the outlines of which follow the cheekbones and left forehead line. Charlot has moved beyond analyzing Goupil's face to using it for a strong design.

The same devices of stylization have been used for two unusual profiles in charcoal and wash—*Bearded Man in Profile* and *Bearded Man with Hat in Profile*—which Charlot dated tentatively 1916 or 1917.¹⁶⁷ The two were originally on one large sheet of paper, which was then roughly ripped in two. This was unusual for Charlot, and I suspect he was going to discard the sheet and then decided to keep the pieces. In these two profiles, Charlot increases his stylization two further levels. The first, *Bearded Man in Profile*, is a somewhat younger person than Louis Goupil, but has the same sort of beard; an imaginary figure, I believe, rather than a real portrait. The head, in slight three-quarter perspective, is divided into sections, several of which are the same as those used for Goupil: eye sack and eyebrows form a rough circle and the area is continued across the eyebrow line; the cheek is an oval area painted pink; moustache and beard, and so on. The area lines are much thicker and thus more prominent. Moreover, they have been connected more closely. For instance, the ear area becomes the culmination of the beard along the jaw. Shadows are now described as areas whose outlines do not follow a physical line, for instance, the area of shadow at the bottom of the beard. The design has distorted the head much more than in the Goupil portrait, and the color is unnaturalistic: the nose a yellow streak, the eye area a strong purple, and the inner ear a dark green.

Bearded Man with Hat in Profile increases the stylization one more degree. In *Bearded Man in Profile*, the nose had been almost completely absorbed into the line of the profile; in this next painting, the nose has completely disappeared into the continuous, slightly curved line from the hat down to the mouth. The beard on the chin and jaw is now a fully integrated area that pushes unrealistically into the space occupied earlier by the back of the head. Similarly, the mouth area has been enlarged to parallel the beard. For the coloring of the mouth, Charlot skips over the *Bearded Man in Profile* and returns to the strong red he used in the stylized portrait of Goupil. The cheek and ear would be difficult to identify if they could not be compared with *Bearded Man in Profile*. The hat itself has been reduced to its geometric form—which was the way Charlot had always treated Goupil's fez; the brim of the hat is, however, oddly unrealistic. The areal treatment of the large, irregular shadow on the back of the hat is given more prominence than the shadow on the beard in the previous work, and the coloring of all the areas is even more unrealistic than before. The distortion of the work is so extreme that some elements cannot be identified with certainty.

The period from the death of Henri to Charlot's induction into the army was clearly one of stylistic exploration and innovation. The main line of Charlot's development can be found in his liturgical style, but his creative mind was producing other options as well. The liturgical style will dominate Charlot's army years, but the experience of the war and the postwar period will release a new and even stronger energy of exploration.

¹ *Three Portraits*, 5" high X 3-1/2" wide, pencil and watercolor, all dated 1914. All three are signed JC in a vertical rectangle as is *Forest Scene* of 1914.

² *Self-Portrait*, 14" high X 10" wide, pencil and watercolor. Zohmah Charlot noted "before 1914"; this probably represents a guess by Charlot, the point being that it was before the events of July.

- ³ Two sheets of notes exist. The first is dated August 1914, 4:35 PM, at Pözl: “ballon 200 m” ‘balloon at two hundred meters.’ Odette wrote: “Lettre jetée par Mr Schmit [*sic*] du ballon captif à Pelz près Munich. Mr Schmit posa le téléphone sans fil des dirigeables [*sic*]. Il est un des plus célèbres télégraphistes et téléphonistes sans fil d’Allemagne” ‘Letter thrown by Mr. Schmidt from a tethered balloon at Pelz near Munich. Mr. Schmidt installed the wirelesses of the dirigibles. He is one of the most famous telegraphists and wireless operators of Germany.’ Odette sent the second sheet to me with the note: “Ci-joint un papier que les officiers bavarois, à casque à pointe de 1913 [*sic*], le seul régiment alors ayant des ballons, m’ont envoyé du haut de leur nacelle” ‘Attached a paper that the Bavarian officers—with their 1913 pointed helmets, the only regiment at the time that had balloons—sent me from the top of their basket’ (October 4, 1965). Both sheets are in the JCC along with photographs taken on the occasion.
- ⁴ *German Landscape with Farm Buildings*, 5-1/2” high X 3-1/4” wide, pencil and wash. *German Peasant Woman, profile*, 5-1/2” high X 3-1/4” wide, pencil and wash.
- ⁵ “Jean Charlot’s Notes on Early French Work.” *Fat German Officer on Horse*, pencil and wash, 5-1/2” high X 3-1/4” wide; written on verso: “Freiburg-in-Brisgau. *German mobilisation.*” *Manifestation guerrière*, pencil and wash, 5-1/2” high X 3-1/4” wide, signed JC in vertical rectangle; written on verso in a later hand: “Freiburg-in-Brisgau German students at declaration war.”
- ⁶ *Administration générale du département de la Seine, à la Comptabilité*, recto: Four profiles of an old man, signed JC, dated 1914; verso: “Papa, two portraits of Henri Charlot, bust and full-length sitting in chair,” title on sheet: “Papa,” dated 1914: pencil on paper (from red-lined notebook), 6-7/8” high X 8-5/8” wide. *Portrait of Henri Charlot Sick*, in profile, 6-1/2” X 6-1/2” approximate, pencil on broken gold circle, pasted onto gray-green cardboard of irregular shape: 7-1/2” X 5”, September–October 1914, after return from Germany. In style, this portrait resembles *Bon Papa*, dated November 1914; the date would fit the appearance of Henri. *One sheet: three portraits of Henri Charlot sick; and one of Louis Goupil sleeping*, pencil, 6-3/8” high X 7-1/2” wide, irregular shape; verso: *Two Portraits of Henri Charlot sick*, one cut off, dated January 4, 1915. *Portrait of Henri Charlot, sick in bed*, pencil, 6” high X 3-5/8” wide, dated “8 Août 1915.” *Three Sheets with Portraits of Henri Charlot on his Death-Bed*, pencil; two pencil and white highlights, one dated “22 Septembre 1915.”
- ⁷ The label is probably in the hand of Odette.
- ⁸ *Four monstrous faces underwater with aquatic plants*, ink with green, yellow, and blue chalk on purple paper, 4-3/8” high X 7-9/16” wide. *Caricature of a man with two protruding teeth*, ink on light green paper with white chalk (?) highlights, circle, 2-1/2” diameter.
- ⁹ “JC Notes on his Early Artwork.” *Three Studies of a Dead Bird*, pencil, irregular shapes: (1) bird in hand, 4-1/4” X 6-1/4” arch on square base; (2) bird with wings folded, pictured twice, 5-3/8” X 5-3/4”; (3) bird with wings spread, 5-3/8” X 4-1/4”, verso: bird with wings folded.
- ¹⁰ *Cabré sous le coup de fouet de la haine sœur*, between September 14 and November 3, 1914.
- ¹¹ *Oh ! non face camuse et creuse, il n'est pas vrai*, 1915. In his *Dance of Death* (1951), Charlot used this idea more positively: the child recognizes that the skeletal image is an angel in disguise, because on Easter, at Christ’s resurrection, death itself has died.

¹² *Dieu mon maître*, December 1914. See also *Les portes qui s'ouvraient sont roguées et fermées. Il est beau de porter le rire qui dédaigne. Ce monde-cy n'est pas tel un branchaige*, November 3, 1914.

¹³ Brenner reported on November 3, 1929:

He had a little extra money and he's playing the stock market with it...anything to amuse himself. Anything to put his mind on. (Glusker 2010: 757)

Characteristic that he would start doing this at the Crash.

¹⁴ In an exchange of letters in the late 1930s, two aunts were trying to help Odette locate lost or misplaced family effects, including the silverware, and were worried that Jean was not receiving some objects due him. Charlot wrote one of the aunts that everything should be left to Odette, and to Odette that she should not worry about the problem.

¹⁵ *Bedroom at Saint Mandé*, black pencil, 10" X 8", between June and December 1915.

¹⁶ Curiously, at the 1939 World's Fair, Charlot tried a machine that was designed to find one's professional abilities on the basis of the information provided by the user: it concluded, to my mother's surprise but not denial, that Charlot was a business genius!

¹⁷ I have discussed Charlot's earlier portraits of Louis, who was apparently an interesting model. An H. (?) Didiée drew in pencil *Bon Papa jouant aux échecs*, 5-5/8 high X 3-7/9" wide, signed calligraphically "HD" (?). On the verso, probably in Odette's hand, is written: "Bon Papa jouant aux échecs crayon de Mr Didiée Poissy 1912" 'Grampa playing chess pencil drawing by Mr. Didiée Poissy 1912.' The drawing is similar to ones Charlot would later do of his grandfather; Didiée may have been one of his private teachers. Hippolyte-Marguerite "Didier ou Didiée," born in Paris in the nineteenth century, is listed in Bénézit as a painter of portraits and creator of drawings and pastels.

¹⁸ *Bon Papa*, pencil, 5-3/10" high X 4" wide, signed "JC," dated "1914 Nov?" (the question mark seems to be in a later hand). In "Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work" is noted: "Louis Goupil. Good portrait. Looks just like him." I cannot be sure however that this remark applies to this particular drawing.

¹⁹ *One sheet: two portraits of Louis Goupil sleeping*, pencil and wash, 7" high X 3-1/2" wide.

²⁰ *Louis Goupil Seated in Jean Charlot's Bedroom*, pencil and wash on paper, 9-1/2" high X 6-1/8" wide. A photograph of Louis taken in another room shows him in the same cap and cloak, and holding his hands on his lap, but more slumped in his seat than Charlot depicted him.

²¹ A photocopy of the letter is in the JCC. John Charlot 1990–1991: 66 f.

²² Charlot 1963: 179. Morse 1976: viii.

²³ Morse 1976: viii. Tabletalk early 1970s; Charlot refers to an 1840 book, which is Ternaux-Compans' French translation of Ixtlilxóchitl, references given below. In the manuscript, part 1, he plans to use other books: "Demandez *Mémoire* sur la peinture didactique et l'écriture figurative des anciens Mexicains (Paris 1849 in 8^o) Aubin" 'Ask for the *Mémoire* on the didactic painting and figurative writing of the ancient Mexicans (Paris 1849 in 8^o) Aubin.'

- ²⁴ Part 2: “Notes from, Ixtlilxóchitl translated into French by H. Ternaux-Compans: *Histoire des Chichimèques*, in *Voyages, relations, et mémoires originaux...*, Paris 1840, Tome I, ch. IV to XXIX,” eight unfolded sheets, numbered with Roman numerals, written in pencil on both sides, two pages on each side; some corrections and additions by Charlot in 1972. Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, 1975. Ternaux-Compans 1837–1841; Volumes 12 and 13, published in 1840, contain the first part and the second part of *Histoire des Chichimèques ou des Anciens Rois de Tezcuco, par Don Fernando d’Alva Ixtlilxochitl, traduite sur le Manuscrit Espagnol*. Charlot refers above to the first part as “Tome I.”
- ²⁵ Part 1: “Texte summarized from Boban. V. 1, taken to mss. Department, Bibliothèque Nationale, commented looking at the originals,” pencil and wash, 4-1/2” high X 7” wide. These are detached and unfolded sheets from a small notebook; six sheets, all but one used on both sides; two pages, written on both sides, notes and collation with Boban by the author in 1972.
- ²⁶ E.g., Charnay 1885: 32. Charlot later purchased a copy of Peñafiel 1885; but I do not know that his family possessed a copy of this book during his childhood. While working as an archeologist at Chich’en Itza, Charlot learned rudimentary conversational Maya, and his discussion of Maya hieroglyphs was recognized as helpful by the later decoders of the inscriptions.
- ²⁷ For instance, in Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931, he mentions a number of codices (299), including Dresden, 238, 240 f., 248 f., 252, 271 f., 273, 279 f., 290, 295, 302, 306; Persianus, 240 f.; Tro-Cortesiansus, 241, 279 f., 281; Vienna, 273; and Zouche, 302.
- ²⁸ Jacques and Schwartz 2001, sketches the history of the Ecole and provides an anthology of writings on the institution.
- ²⁹ Compare the nineteenth-century practice in Weinberg 1991: 18 ff. Jacques and Schwartz 2001: 60, 170–175, provide vivid descriptions.
- ³⁰ Henri Auguste Jules Patey, 1855–1930, medalist and professor at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts.
- ³¹ *Hall of Casts at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, pencil with a few gouache (?) highlights, 6-1/4” high X 9-1/2” wide, dated July 1915. *Hall of Casts at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, pencil with gouache (?), 7-1/2” wide X 11” wide, dated “Noël 1915.”
- ³² Versos respectively of *Hall of Plaster Casts, Copy of Last Judgement and Casts* and *Hall of Plaster Casts, Gisants*.
- ³³ Compare Jacques and Schwartz 2001: 171.
- ³⁴ *Hall of Plaster Casts, two people working under Cellini’s Perseus*, charcoal and burnt umber (?), 47 cm high X 60 cm wide.
- ³⁵ *Hall of Plaster Casts, Copy of Last Judgment and Casts*, colored pencil on blue paper, 47 cm high X 23 cm wide.

- ³⁶ *Studio Female Nude*, soft pencil, 14-3/4" high X 10-1/4" wide, on verso of mural project *noé: flood*.
Studio Male Nude, Shoulder and Arm, soft pencil, 14-3/4" high X 10-1/4" wide, on verso of *noé: post-flood*. At one time, the two drawings were affixed to a surface with small round stickers bearing the inscription, "Henri Charlot, 22, rue de Bondy, Paris"; this might have been done so that they could be examined at length. I believe Charlot reused the paper for the stylistically very different drawings on the recto.
- ³⁷ *Study of male head, from a model*, 47 cm high X 29 1/2 cm wide; on verso of *Hall of Plaster Casts, two people working under Cellini's Perseus*.
- ³⁸ Charlot 1932; quoted in full in "Charlot Writes of New Interest in Bouguereau's Art" 1932.
- ³⁹ An example is the figure drawing by Charlotte Trouessard, *Seated Nude Woman*, 1904, Weisberg and Becker 1999: 22. José Clemente Orozco's use of the same pose is, I believe, testimony to his Classical art education (Reed 1956: Plate 5). Compare his Cortes and Malinche of 1926.
- ⁴⁰ An example is *Sheet with drawing on both sides*, 3-5/8" high X 6" wide; recto: *René Vielville*, portrait in profile; verso: *Riverbank Landscape*.
- ⁴¹ *Five Sheets of Images of Paris in August 1914*, four are pencil and wash, one is colored pencil, 9-5/6" X 6", same type of paper, torn from pad and sometimes trimmed, making the size a little variable. All are dated 1914, and one is dated August 1914. August 1914 seems a good date for the entire set.
- ⁴² *postiers mobilisés, chef d'orchestre and 1870 et 1914*, pencil and wash, 3-1/16" high X 6-1/16" wide.
- ⁴³ "Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work." A photograph of Eugène Goupil in his 1870 uniform is found in the JCC.
- ⁴⁴ "La carte des opérations !", "L'aéro allemand," Place de la Trinité, Aout 1914. "En regardant l'aérobosch ! 1 Verlinguet. 2. Alexis," pencil and wash, 6-7/8" high X 4-1/4" wide, signed JC, dated 1914; verso: "Après la bombe pruneaux casseurs de vitres," pencil.
- ⁴⁵ *Six Small Sheets of Watercolors of Paris in September 1914*, pencil and wash: (a) three scenes on one sheet, 5-1/4" X 4-1/8": (i) *Procession at Notre Dame*, signed Jcharlot (*sic*), dated "14 Sept 1914"; (ii) *Fortifs*, dated "Sept. 1914"; (iii) *Fortifs*; (b) two scenes on one sheet, 5-1/4" X 4": (i) *marins devant la grand roue*, dated 1914; (ii) *soldats place de la Bastille*, dated 1914; verso: beginning of sketch for a riverbank scene; (c) *Marins [?] devant L'Ecole Militaire*, 2" high X 5-1/4" wide, dated 1914; (d) two scenes on one sheet, 5-1/4" X 4": (i) *contre-soleil*, dated 1914; (ii) *Marins et autos réquisitionnés*, dated 1914; (e) *coup de soleil*, 2-3/4" high X 4-1/4" wide, dated "Sept 1914"; (f) two scenes on one sheet, 3-1/2" X 4-1/4", undated: (i) *Notre Dame at Sunset*; (ii) *Cardinal at Balcony*. "Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work": "coup de soleil fortifs, chevaux de bois etc. goes with others."

- ⁴⁶ *Exhibition of Airplanes at the Court of the Invalides*, pencil, 4" high X 6-3/4" wide (the paper has been ripped from a small sketchbook), dated January 1916. "Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work." The same exhibition may be the subject of the photographs in Ministère de la Guerre, 1916 [?], *La Guerre: Documents de la Section Photographique de L'Armée*, Fascicule 11: *Prisonniers et Trophées*, Plates 12 and 13: "Canons et avions pris à l'ennemi, exposés dans la cour d'honneur des Invalides" 'Cannons and airplanes taken from the enemy, exhibited in the court of honor of the Invalides.'
- ⁴⁷ Interview October 18, 1970. See also the interview of September 14, 1970, which I have quoted when discussing Charlot's childhood oils.
- ⁴⁸ *Our House*, checklist (f). *Our House. Close-Up*, checklist (g). *Gate of Garden*, checklist (h). *Interior. My Studio*, checklist (i). *Roofs*, checklist (j). *Lake*, checklist (k). *Snow Scene*, checklist (l). *Snow Scene, Wall In Foreground*, checklist (m). *Snow Scene*, collection Martin Charlot; all others, collection John Charlot.
- ⁴⁹ Pencil and wash, 4-1/2" X 5-1/2". The paper has not been cut down. Two holes on the left seem to have been used to attach the sheet to an album. The painting is curiously similar to Gustave Caillebotte's *View of Rooftops (Snow Effect)* (1878), Musée d'Orsay.
- ⁵⁰ Oils on paper: *Notre Dame de la Clarté. Cemetery Foreground*, checklist (a); *Notre Dame de la Clarté. Procession*, checklist (b); *Sunny Sous-Bois*, 8-1/2" wide X 5-3/4" high, checklist (c); *Red Rocks And Sea, 1*, checklist (d); *Red Rocks And Sea, 2*, checklist (e). *Notre Dame de la Clarté. Brittany*, pencil and wash on paper, 6-1/2" high X 9-3/8" high.
- ⁵¹ AA I 285; 293, "Brittany had its quiet and forceful say, heard over the noise of more advertised doings in Paris."
- ⁵² The complete song is in the JCC and is published on the web site of the Jean Charlot Foundation. Charlot did not know whether it had ever been published.
- ⁵³ Interview October 22, 1970. Zohmah Charlot, "Notes for Article": "His French education very much included the Louvre, walking along the left bank of the Seine collecting prints by Daumier and Epinal, a trip to Brittany."
- ⁵⁴ A cutout fragment of the chariot of the sun from Poussin's *The Empire of Flora* (1631), may be from this period. Charlot pointed this section out to me when we saw the original together in the summer of 1959.
- ⁵⁵ In the JCC are found issues of *Le Crapouillot* for December 1, 1919, Noël 1919, and July 1, 1920. Charlot sent a text and photographs for a spread on Mexican art, [Charlot] Blanchard September 16, 1922. An illustration of Charlot's painting is commented on favorably in the section edited by Blanchard.
- ⁵⁶ I remember that while living in Hawai'i, he bought one or both of *Célébrité de la Caricature, Ch. De Lam....*, *La Caricature*, no. 78, plate 156 and *Dup.*, *La Caricature*, no. 85, plate 171. In 2002, I saw Daumiers for sale on the quais for six to sixteen euros. Compare Baudelaire's appreciation of Daumier, e.g., 1961: 1006 f.

- ⁵⁷ I remember *Actualités: Manière d'utiliser les jupons nouvellement mis à la mode* on the wall; Charlot thought it was particularly funny and mentioned it in his article "Daumier's Graphic Compositions," pp. 56, 59. At the time he died, the two Daumier prints on his studio wall were *Actualités : Plus que ça d'ballon.....excusez !.....* and *Actualités : M'sieu le boucher....., j'vous la souhaite bonne et heureuse !....* We left them on the wall, and they were damaged by the exposure to the sun, especially the latter.
- ⁵⁸ Delteil 1969. Most if not all of the writing on the prints is later than Charlot's years in Paris. The shorthand on *Le Bain à la Lame* may be from the period. Writing in other hands can be found as well as numbers that do not correspond to Delteil.
- ⁵⁹ Stasik 1980. Charlot's article: "Daumier's graphic compositions," pp. 55–95. Morse's article: "Daumier's Early Lithographs," pp. 6–53.
- ⁶⁰ When, surprised at the sudden remark, I asked him what he meant, he said, "They don't *seem* like the master race!"
- ⁶¹ This can be found throughout Daumier's work, but specially clear examples can be found, such as *Pastorales : Nouveau propriétaire faisant connaissance avec le chien de sa ferme*; *Actualités : Si les ouvriers se battent, comment veut-on que l'édifice se reconstruise ?*; and *Actualités : Membres de la société de secours du dix Décembre, dans l'exercice de leurs philanthropiques fonctions*.
- ⁶² Charlot owned two such works by Daumier: note 57, above. *Fourteen Panels Symbolizing the Fine Arts*. O'Laughlin Auditorium, St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, each approximately 3' X 3-1/2'. August 5–16, 1955.
- ⁶³ Silver 1989: 38–41. Cork 1994: 59 ff., 146.
- ⁶⁴ In Charlot's conversations with Claudel in the 1930s, the playwright emphasized his peasant humor:
- the fun that he had in writing. And he himself insisted that was one of the essential parts of his work, and he said that with great relish and how the critics always tried to escape or to excuse. So I would give him my own thing relating his comical parts, *L'ours et la lune* and so on, with Images d'Epinal, and perhaps marionette plays, and a tradition—I was at the time very desirous to bring everything I liked to a tradition in French art, in French literature. It was easy enough, of course, to take Claudel down to the tradition of the early writers and playwrights, men like Cyrano de Bergerac, whom I knew very well in his writings. (Interview November 25, 1970)
- ⁶⁵ Denis 1912: on Gauguin, 166, also 193, 255; on others, 184; 1922: 26, the Images d'Epinal are among the influences on young liturgical artists.
- ⁶⁶ *His Own Bedroom at Saint Mandé*, wash, 7-1/2" high X 4-3/4" wide, dated "Décembre 1915."
- ⁶⁷ Denis 1912: 226. On the historical development, see 60 f., 123, 156 f., 161–166, 185, 189 ff., 192 f., 210–216, 237–270.

- ⁶⁸ Denis 1912: 259, quoting Apollinaire; Denis is more negative on page 224; but calling Braque and others “des géomètres” ‘geometricians’ does acknowledge that they are using geometric composition. Compare his remarks on Cubism in Denis 1918: 530.
- ⁶⁹ January 25: 1, “Un mois de travail.” Also, Denis 1914: 26; 1922: 152 ff., 213. The proper character of liturgical art was widely discussed at the time, e.g., Colombier January 10, 1921: 96 f., sacred art differs from secular in that it “ne laisse point place à la fantaisie...la chapelle ne s’adresse pas aux mêmes parties de notre sensibilité que le boudoir : elle vise les plus épurées, les moins frivoles, les plus éloignées de la satisfaction immédiate des sens” ‘leaves no room for fantasy...the chapel does not address itself to the same parts of our sensibility as the boudoir: the chapel aims for the most purified, the least frivolous, the most distanced from the immediate satisfaction of the senses.’
- ⁷⁰ Also Frèches-Thory and Terrasse 1991: 9, “To see is to conceive, and to conceive is to compose.”
- ⁷¹ Charlot did not respect Cocteau as a visual artist and disagreed with him as a thinker, but admired his prose style. When I started studying French in 1954, he recommended *Thomas l’Imposteur* (1923) as a good model of style. He also recommended André Gide’s *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (1926). In the early 1950s, he advised me to read C. S. Lewis’ *Out of the Silent Planet*, mentioning specifically that it was a way of presenting Christianity. Later, I was surprised to learn that Lewis was not a Catholic. When a worried University of Hawai‘i librarian alerted my father that I was reading Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) at about eleven or twelve years of age, he told her that if I could read it, I could handle it.
- ⁷² Edward Alden Jewell, born 1888. The painting is *Allegory of the Faith*, ca. 1671–1674.
- ⁷³ Interview September 19, 1970. Compare Charlot’s “Sur la Médiocrité des Hollandais” of 1921, TF.
- ⁷⁴ Denis 1912, uses the word often in this sense, e.g., 165.
- ⁷⁵ E.g., Frèches-Thory and Terrasse 1991: 93, state in their words the ambition of the Nabis “to break away from the confines of easel painting and re-establish painting as a decorative art.” Gamwell 1980: 16. Charlot AA I 285, at the Gilde, “we had in common a vocation to graft the fine arts onto the sturdy stem of the applied arts.”
- ⁷⁶ Interview September 14, 1970. For a similar example of the pejorative use of the word, see Charlot to Brenner (“Regreso de Boston”), criticizing a draft of one of her articles: “El énfasis sobre [‘the emphasis on’] ‘decorative’ in School of Paris is demasiado [‘overly’] far-reaching. The best people are far from being decorators.”

⁷⁷ E.g., Denis 1914; 1922: 55, 142, 147 f., 153 f., 219–222, 242. 244 f., 254 f., 283. Régamey 1948: 49 (“les œuvres déplorables” ‘deplorable works’), 50, 53, 59–64; the Roman Catholic authorities destroyed the liturgical art movement:

Leur indifférence a rendu inefficace le principal moyen du progrès ; elle a empêché un véritable *mouvement* de renaissance large, organique, cohérent, illustré d’œuvres nombreuses et homogènes. (Décidément toutes les positions étaient occupées par les artistes académiques et par les marchands. (Régamey 1948: 62)

Couturier 1948: 67.

⁷⁸ Denis 1922: 21, “Le style : voilà la préoccupation dominante de toutes les jeunes écoles post-impressionnistes...” ‘Style: that is the dominant preoccupation of all the young Post-Impressionist schools’; 26, influences on the young artists.

⁷⁹ The position is summarized by Régamey 1948: 56., “pour faire de la peinture *chrétienne*, il faut d’abord qu’elle soit *humaine*, que le peintre y mette son cœur” ‘to make Christian painting, it is necessary that it first be human, that the painter puts his heart into it.’

⁸⁰ Charlot December 8, 1950, “the men of Beuron, or of the German Nazarenes, who managed only too successfully to produce art in the vacuum of a wish-dream”; 1945 Juan Cordero, “la Escuela de Overbeck, de Kaulbach y de Cornelius. Ojalá nunca hayan visto ustedes tal pintura, porque entristece el alma” ‘the School of Overbeck, Kaulbach and Cornelius. May you never have seen such paintings, because it saddens the soul.’ Régamey 1948:

Beuron avait eu un sens chrétien beaucoup plus fort, mais étroit, et sa volonté d’un art intemporel et impersonnel avait stérilisé l’imagination, la sensibilité, dont dépend la valeur des œuvres ; elle avait sclérosé l’art en formules. (Régamey 1948: 53)

‘Beuron had had a much stronger Christian sense [than the Nazarenes], but narrow, and its desire for an atemporal and impersonal art had sterilized the imagination, the sensibility, on which the value of works depends; she sclerosed art into formulas.’

Verkade 1923 is a justly famous autobiography of a modern artist who joined Beuron; he provides a more positive picture of the school, 230–246, 250 ff. See also Maurice Denis’ description and defense of Beuron in his preface, XI f.: “un système de décoration dépourvu de toute séduction profane, spécifiquement religieux...” ‘a system of decoration devoid of all profane seduction, specifically religious...’ Denis does regret, however, that Verkade abandoned his earlier, more complex style; and sees that Sérusier was not fully comfortable there, Denis 1912: 143 f.; for Denis’ appreciation and criticism, see Denis 1912: 42, 178 ff. Denis also wrote more critically of Beuron, especially its lack of emotion, 1914: 24 f.; 1922: 153 f. My own view is that the Beuron murals have merely historical interest.

⁸¹ Denis did not appreciate the value of prints, assimilating them in his mind to mass-produced art, 1922: 245, 261, 272. He also depreciated the medium of woodblock.

⁸² Verkade 1923: 93 ff., also studied the Italian primitives at the Louvre.

⁸³ Erlande-Brandenburg 1999: 228. Compare Baudelaire 1961: 948 ff. Régamey 1948: 62, praises communal work of the Les Ateliers d'Art sacré. Modernists could also idealize the past and be inspired by it; in 1917, André Michel praised earlier artists as spokesmen for their communities, "the communal beliefs on which the *cit * was founded and around which its life was organized" (Silver 1989: 198).

⁸⁴ The JCC contains the issues kept by Charlot: No number or date, probably October 25, 1917; it is the first issue. Number 2, November 25, 1917. Number 3, December 25, 1917. Number 4, January 25, 1918. Number 6, March 25, 1918. Number 7, April 25, 1918, pages 1 and 2 only. The Biblioth que Nationale de France has kindly photocopied from its collection for the JCC the complete Number 7 as well as Number 8, May 1918, and Number 9, June 1918. Number 5 is missing in both the JCC and the BNF, and the existence of later numbers is not known.

⁸⁵ Pages 1 f. Biographical information on Cadart is found in "M. l'Abb  Leon Cadart (1882–1950)" 1951. A priest of the diocese of Soissons, he took refuge in Paris at the outbreak of the war. His work with the Gilde is described inaccurately:

A la m me  poque, M. l'abb  Cadart fonda et dirigea la "Gilde des Artistes" dans le quartier de Saint-Germain-des Pr s ; c' tait le premier groupement des artistes catholiques, qui, depuis, s'est  tendu consid rablement. M. Cadart les r unissait tant t   l' glise Saint-Germain-des Pr s, tant t dans un studio du quartier, et m me dans un grenier de la rue du Cherche-Midi, afin d'atteindre ceux qui avaient oubli  le chemin de l' glise.

'At the same time, Father Cadart founded and directed the "Guild of Artists" in the neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des Pr s; it was the first grouping of catholic artists, which, since, has considerably spread. Mr. Cadart assembled them sometimes at the church of Saint-Germain-des Pr s, sometimes in a neighborhood studio, and even in a garret in the street of Cherche-Midi, in order to reach those who had forgotten the path of the church.'

The article describes his character as attractive to artists: "sa propre culture, son instinct du beau, la distinction de son esprit et de ses sentiments..." 'his personal cultivation, his instinct for the beautiful, the distinction of his mind and emotions....'

⁸⁶ Interview October 7, 1970. Also *AA* I 285.

⁸⁷ For the former exhibition, see Cordis April 1921: “Au cours de la guerre, en 1917, il a fait un envoi qui fut apprécié à l’exposition Saint-Jean. Ses projets d’étoffes y furent primés” ‘During the war, in 1917, he sent a contribution that was appreciated at the Saint Jean exhibition. His cloth projects received a prize there.’ The latter exhibition will be discussed below. Denis mentions “notre vieille société de St.-Jean” ‘our old society of St.-Jean’ in his article of November 10, 1918: 520; 1922: 201, he treats the Gilde as one of several new groups; 1922: 199, the then president of the Saint Jean society was Henry Cochin. Dévignes 1918: 3, commends a joint exhibition as “l’union des deux sociétés rivales” ‘the union of two rival societies.’ Brillant 1920: 310 f., is more positive than Charlot on the Société de Saint-Jean: “elle n’est point exclusive et jalouse de ses privilèges ; son accueil est le plus aimable et le plus souriant du monde.” Ambroselli 2003: 32, 38.

⁸⁸ October 25, 1917: 2; December 25, 1917: 1; January 25, 1918: 1, 2.

⁸⁹ Pen and wash, 5-3/8” high X 3-1/2” wide, painted on the recto of a blank postcard. The picture is signed R.N. Another pencil portrait of him, a serious one, was done around the same time (Charlot has his slight beard).

⁹⁰ “Vie de ‘la Gilde’ en 1917” January 25, 1918. April 25, 1918, 1.

⁹¹ Huré, December 25, 1917, “Information Artistique.” “Le Théâtre” March 25, 1918.

⁹² “L’Exposition” March 25, 1918. A shorter notice was published by Plum January 25, 1918; members of the Gilde could participate gratis.

⁹³ Chauvin December 25, 1917; he also argues eloquently against bad church art.

⁹⁴ M. de C. March 25, 1918. Compare Denis’ writings on the same subject, 1922: 54, 200 f., 238 ff., 254. Brillant 1920: 310. Silver 1989: 187 ff.

⁹⁵ October 25, 1917. Compare Denis 1922: 48 f.

⁹⁶ November 25, 1917: 4. This is a theme of Denis, e.g., 1922: 145 ff.

⁹⁷ December 25, 1917, 2. I have discussed this in my 1983: 211–218, 212.

⁹⁸ On the general discussion, see Régamey 1948: 53, 56, 59 ff. Couturier 1948: 66 f.

⁹⁹ AA I 286. On Denis and Desvallières as leaders in the liturgical art movement, see Régamey 1948: 50, 52, 53–57. Couturier 1948: 66.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Verkade 1923: 77, “Il [Gauguin] rendit tous ses droits à la composition du tableau et enseigna avec Goethe que c’est dans la limitation des moyens que l’artiste peut mieux montrer sa force” ‘He rendered to the composition of the picture all its rights and taught as did Goethe that it is in the limitation of means that the artist can best show his power’; art is connected to the honesty and morals of the artist. See also 75 ff., 95 ff.

¹⁰¹ The only trace of anti-Semitism I have found in Denis’ writings on art is the swipe in Denis 1912: 184.

¹⁰² December 25, 1917: 1. “La Conférence de M. Maurice Denis” January 25, 1917. The published version, “Le Symbolisme et l’Art Religieux Moderne” November 10, 1918, is very close but not identical to his talk to the Gilde, as seen in a comparison with Charlot’s own notes at the talk. I will quote from the published version, but use the report in *La Gilde* and Charlot’s notes for passages in my own words.

¹⁰³ Charlot’s notes are in *Notebook 1918*.

¹⁰⁴ Denis 1918: 528. Charlot echoes this text much later:

If Catholic art would only respect the nature of the material, stop disguising its infamous plaster into marbles and gold. A wooden statue that would exhibit the facets made by the axe in the carving process would have a virtue of humbleness, of truthfulness, that would make it a virtuous act. A stone saint that would remain boulder shaped or block shaped would have a kind of physical righteousness that would make its obeisance to God’s designs on its matter. Thus the style could blend with the story to edify us. (Summer 1951 Earlier Text)

¹⁰⁵ Compare Denis 1912: 259, 263; and Maurice Barrès famous trilogy *Le Culte du moi* (1888–1891).

Denis 1922: 158, the Renaissance introduced “de l’orgueil et de la subjectivité” ‘pride and subjectivity.’

¹⁰⁶ Interview September 14, 1970. The mural Charlot refers to was actually done in 1912. Odette inscribed Terrasse 1970 on June 24, 1970: “Jean, je l’espère sera charmé au souvenir des années de sa jeunesse où il a travaillé chez Maurice Denis” ‘Jean, I hope he will be charmed by the memory of the years of his youth when he worked with Maurice Denis.’ Charlot never wrote or mentioned that he worked with Denis, but he did visit him after the war. Couturier 1948: 64.

¹⁰⁷ Denis 1912: 1, note one, “Je n’avais pas vingt ans” ‘I wasn’t yet twenty.’ Charlot returned often to Denis’ statement, e.g., December 18, 1969: “After 80 years of mulling over this formula, we all agree as to its truth.”

¹⁰⁸ Jean de Pierrefeu in Agathon 1913: 268 f. Sutton 1982: 13, 28–33.

¹⁰⁹ Laude 1975: 18, 20, 25 f., 34f. Reymond 1975: 214 ff., 219. Silver 1989 has exposed this development in detail. A conservative anti-German and anti-Semitic reaction was directed against avant-garde art, especially Cubism (8–11, 146 f.). A number of avant-garde artists joined this reaction (44–47, 228), although others, like Albert Gleizes, whom Charlot admired, resisted it (47 ff.). Important tenets of this reaction were the emphasis on order (47), the rejection of individualism (e.g., 57), and an artistic chauvinism (26 f., 61 ff.) that privileged Classicism (90–104). The new Classicizing movement of the avant-garde was the result of this reaction (63–73, 85–115, 148–164, 236–258, 271–298); in sum, “the source of the new classicism during the war was indisputably the French Right” (104), a source of embarrassment to some (103 f.). Denis’ writings are major expressions of this anti-German chauvinism, 1922: 12 f., 25 ff., 35, 51, 54 f.; the connection to right-wing politics is especially clear on page 48. Silver 1989: 197, Denis was “a firmly entrenched member of the right-wing intelligentsia before the war.”

¹¹⁰ Denis 1912: 258. See also 43, 247, 268 f.; 1922: 237.

¹¹¹ Full bibliographical information in TF. The original typescript is kept in the JCC. “‘Nous les Jeunes !’ Conference de M. Charlot, Artiste décorateur,” *La Gilde*, dated November 1916. (a) no number or date, but it is Number 1, and probably October 25, 1917, p. 4, full page; typescript pp. 1–6, line 8. (b) Number 3, December 25, 1917, p. 4, bottom half of page; typescript pp. 6, line 9–p. 8, line 15. (c) Number 4, January 25, 1918, pp. 3 f., full pages; typescript p. 8, line 16–p. 19, line 14. (d) conjecture, issue missing in JCC: Number 5, February 25, 1918; typescript p. 19, line. 15–p. 21, line 9. (e) Number 6, March 25, 1918, p. 4, bottom half of page; typescript p. 21, line 10, to the end.

¹¹² “‘Nous les Jeunes !’” abbreviated version, *Le Petit Messager des Arts et des Artistes, et des Industries d'Art*, 2^e Série de Guerre, Number 39, February 10–March 1, 1917, clipping in JCC. The extract bears Charlot’s name at the end and was introduced by a paragraph:

Nous avons donné récemment la constitution de la “gilde de Notre-Dame” et annoncé qu’elle organisait une série de conférences à son siège social. La première de ces conférences a été faite par M. Jean Charlot, jeune artiste décorateur. Nous la publions ici—comme nous publierons toutes celles, d’un intérêt artistique égal, qu’on nous adressera, de quelque milieu artistiques qu’elles viennent.

‘We have provided recently the constitution of the “Gilde Notre-Dame” and announced that it was organizing a series of lectures at its site. The first of these lectures has been given by Mr. Jean Charlot, young artist decorator. We publish it here—as we will publish all those with an equal artistic interest, that will be sent to us from whichever artistic circles they come.’

Fabre March 1917?, clipping in JCC. The clipping is lacunose, and I have not been able to obtain the article through interlibrary loan.

¹¹³ Charlot would continue to use such outlines into the 1920s. Brenner (Idols 312) wrote that Charlot “is inclined to write letters numbering the paragraphs and heading them with a textual description of the contents, but not in Latin, because that would be too bizarre.” No such letters have survived.

¹¹⁴ Compare:

catholicisme moderne, ce christianisme courageux et vrai, positif, substitué à la religion négative et timorée de naguère. (Régamey 1948: 54)
‘modern Catholicism, this christianity that is courageous and true, positive, substituted for the former negative and timorous religion.’

¹¹⁵ Denis 1912: 165, 244. Interview October 13, 1970, quoted below.

- ¹¹⁶ November 25, 1917: 3; Cadart prefers a more general word, with less connotation of manual labor and class: “Tout artiste doit être un travailleur...” ‘Every artist must be someone who works....’ Cadart may have changed his mind on this point; Lescure November 25, 1916, reports on Cadart’s series of 1917: “il développa que l’artiste est d’abord un ouvrier” ‘he developed the idea that the artist is first of all a worker.’
- ¹¹⁷ Reynolds 1961: 62, 129. Compare Denis 1918: 522 ff, and his remarks on hierarchical composition, discussed above; 1922: 232. Certain passages in Denis do not accord with this view, e.g., Denis 1912: 53.
- ¹¹⁸ Compare Denis 1912: 36, “Or, à l’époque classique, gréco-romaine, l’idéal de l’homme c’est l’homme lui-même, et le but de tout l’effort humain c’est de magnifier le corps de l’homme” ‘In the Classical age, the Greco-Roman, the ideal of man was man himself, and the goal of all human effort was to magnify the body of man.’ Also Denis 1918: 523, “l’œuvre d’art digne de ce nom crée en nous un état mystique ou du moins analogue à la vision mystique” ‘a work of art worthy of the name creates in us a state that is mystical or at least analogous to the mystic vision.’ Verkade 1923: 83, mysticism influenced anti-realism.
- ¹¹⁹ Interview October 7, 1970. Charlot was using the model of an alphabet as late as Brenner-Charlot 1928; see the quotation in Chapter 8, below.
- ¹²⁰ For similarities to “Nous les Jeunes !”, see, e.g., Denis 1922: 49, 148 f., 174, 223, 239, 521.
- ¹²¹ Compare Régamey 1948: 51, 53, 62.
- ¹²² “La Probité Artistique,” French, March–April 1917, 10 pp. mss., 10 pp. typescript, double-spaced, in TF.
- ¹²³ Charlot will echo this passage in his review of Jacques Maritain’s *The Responsibility of the Artist*, August 1960: 111: “Grown old, a master shall repeat forms now empty, once the truthful expression of his youthful ecstasy.” Also *AA I* 149.
- ¹²⁴ Worship outside the city walls was practiced by the early French Protestants and allowed, for instance, by the Edict of January 17, 1562.
- ¹²⁵ “La Conférence de M. Maurice Denis” January 25, 1918. Delannoy 1996: 11–24.
- ¹²⁶ Interview September 14, 1970. See also *AA I* 286 f. Charvet 1926 describes the great charm of a visit to Le Prieuré.
- ¹²⁷ Macé de Lépinay 1997: 20. I will discuss those painters in relation to Charlot’s mural project in chapter 8.

¹²⁸ AA I 287. The first name is sometimes recorded as Georges-Olivier. I have not seen the painting to which Charlot refers, but Desvallières' *Le Drapeau du Sacré-Cœur* was justly famous; illustrated in *Art et Décoration*, July–August 1919, p. 67; described by Brillant 1920: 313 f.; 1924: 264. Desvallières' *Le Sacré Cœur*, oil on cardboard, 1920, at the Musée Départemental Maurice Denis Le Prieuré, is moving; illustrated in Delannoy 1996: 70; compare the earlier painting of the same subject, Ambroselli 2003: 31. The Christ has been aged by suffering into a father figure and mourns over fallen French flags; the years 1914–1918 are inscribed. In the background is the church of Sacré Cœur at Montmartre, built as an expiation for the sins of France that led to the defeat in the war of 1870. Desvallières' *Le Christ à la Colonne*, 1910, in the same museum, resembles Spanish paintings of the tortured Christ; Ambroselli 2003: 104 f. The son killed in the war was Daniel (1897–1915), Ambroselli 2003: 129. Ambroselli's book testifies to the current revival of interest in this worthy artist. Desvallières' mural career started after Charlot had left for Mexico (Régamey 1948: 50; Couturier 1948: 64). Charlot did not know the murals created in France after that time (Couturier 1948: 64 f.).

¹²⁹ May 12, 1872–September 7, 1931. He was born Jules Oury, but gave himself the hyphenated pseudonym MarcelLenoir. Charlot and others often treated the name as if it were not hyphenated.

Claude Namy, then director of the Musée Marcel-Lenoir, told me by telephone that he had information that my father actually met the artist, but I never received any documentation. Marie-Ange Namy, current co-director of the museum, emailed me on February 10, 2013:

indeed, long ago, a member of the French Cultural Centre in Athens, that we have never been able to reach, had letters of your father very enthusiastic about the artist marcel-lenoir. We have never seen those letters.

¹³⁰ Brillant 1924: 266; also 267. Couturier 1948: 65.

¹³¹ I have read MarcelLenoir 1928, which seems to consist of extracts from essays.

¹³² Interview September 19, 1970. "Charlot" ca. 1971. Régamey 1948: 57, 59 f.

¹³³ Charlot dated it ca. 1916, and 1916 seems to be the best date. He is still wearing his beard, and the three works identified as his are early, the print being number 2 in Morse. Charlot wrote "woodcuts" in the plural when he identified his works on the verso, but I see only this one. In "Nouvelles de 'La Gilde,'" January 25, 1918, "Première liste," Huré is described as a painter and Trudon as a sculptor.

- ¹³⁴ Interview October 7, 1970. The birth and death dates are taken from a typescript by Véronique Chaussé. The latter date conflicts with Charlot's memory that she was still alive, though very sick, when he tried to visit her in 1968 while in Paris. I may, however, be reconstructing Charlot's itinerary mistakenly. *Artists of the World* (2000) states that Huré died "before 1955." Huré is currently receiving well-deserved attention; e.g., Couturier 1948: 65 ("dont on ne dira jamais assez tout ce que lui doit la renaissance de l'art du vitrail" 'of whom enough can never be said of all that the renaissance of the stained glass window owes to her'), 66; Chaussé 2000; Cohen, Abram, and Lambert, 2002: 200, 271 ff. I thank Marie El Caïdi and Chaussé for information and publications.
- ¹³⁵ The image itself is 12" long X 5" wide, printed in reddish-brown ink, one lightly and one strongly. The darker image has a separate block printed above the image in black, framed lettering: "Gilde de Notre Dame." The darker image alone has holes that indicate that it was placed on a wall for viewing. Indeed, the lighter print may be a trial.
- ¹³⁶ Image 3-3/4" high X 5-1/2" wide. The image is printed in light green on thin paper; this has been pasted to a larger, thicker sheet that was previously painted with a gold square outline. When the image was pasted on top of this, part of the gold showed through around the edges of the image. Charlot mounted the vignettes from his *Chemin de Croix* in the same way. Huré signed below the bottom right corner of this gold outline; her signature is "artistic," like some of Charlot's: her initial *M* is joined to the *H* of her last name. Holes at the four corners of the larger sheet show that the print was stuck to a wall for viewing. Charlot wrote on the recto in a later hand: "Marguerite Huré 1915?" On the back is written: "1917."
- ¹³⁷ The image is irregular; roughly 4-3/4" high X 3-1/2" wide. Charlot has written on it in a later hand: "de Marguerite Huré ?" 'Marguerite Huré's?'
- ¹³⁸ Tabletalk February 12, 1972. For a later example of her tough style, which resembles her early woodcuts, see Cordier 1937: 21.
- ¹³⁹ In an undated letter of the mid-1930s, Charlot responded to one from Odette: "Le procès Huré fait du bruit ici aussi. J'espère qu'elle n'est en rien impliquée" 'The Huré trial is making noise here as well. I hope she isn't implicated in anything.' On the "affaire Fécamp," see Chaussé 2000: 33, note 11.
- ¹⁴⁰ In 1929–1931, Perret had designed her house–studio according to her specifications at 25, rue du Belvédère, Boulogne-Billancourt, Hauts-de-Seine.
- ¹⁴¹ Compare criticisms of Denis' late Neoclassicism by Régamey 1948: 56 f.
- ¹⁴² "Le Carnet d'un Curieux" December 1921: 666. Couturier 1948: 65. Ambroselli 2003: 62, 96, 98 f., 129, 131. Huré's review of December 25, 1917, "Information Artistique," suggests the feminine character of stitchery and the level of seriousness she herself attributed to it: "les œuvres simples, gaies, françaises de Mlle Sabine Desvallières" 'the simple, gay, French works of Miss Sabine Desvallières.' Also Brillant 1920: 311, "ce délicat et pieux travail" 'this delicate and pious work.'
- ¹⁴³ Interview October 7, 1970. In Charlot's list "Accomplish. 4—" of November 1930, he mentions the exhibition at "3-17" or March 1917.

- ¹⁴⁴ *Rondels of the Mysteries of the Rosary*, irregular circular cutouts painted, gouache on paper, diameter approximately 4” to 5.”
- ¹⁴⁵ The JCC also contains a cloth mosaic *The Crucifixion with Three Women*—silk on felt (?), 9” high X 7-1/2” wide—which does not belong to the Rondel series. The childlike design and execution are, I believe, by other hands.
- ¹⁴⁶ Kirstein 1948: 9. Joseph Bernard (1866–1931) was also creating proto-Art-Nouveau sculpture in the 1910s.
- ¹⁴⁷ Silver 1989: 241 ff., discusses the painting, but does not mention Nadelman. Also Lucie-Smith 1990: 11 f.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Plants*, pencil and wash, 5-3/16” X 4”, dated tentatively 1916–1917 by Charlot, “Jean Charlot’s Notes on Early French Work”: “done in Paris. Same style as liturgical cloths. 1916–1917. Didn’t have watercolors for war sketches of plants. = Gilde times.”
- ¹⁴⁹ On the verso of *Legendre, Left Arm and Hand; Study for L’Amitié*, pencil on paper, 20-1/2” high X 14” wide. The stylistic differences between the two drawings convince me that Charlot was reusing an older sheet for the *Legendre* study. The style I mention in the text—a possible argument against my dating—is found in Charlot’s experiments of 1919–1920, and resembles Greco-Roman gryphons; I discuss this style in my next chapter.
- ¹⁵⁰ Pencil on paper, 20” high X 29-1/2” wide. The title is partially erased and has been reconstructed by me.
- ¹⁵¹ Charlot would continue this tendency, for instance, in his portrait *Forault* in the sketchbook *Guerre 1918*.
- ¹⁵² Interview November 6, 1970. Also, AA I 288. Paul Gauguin’s polychrome bas-reliefs are probably inspired by Breton art. At the end of the nineteenth century, George Lacombe created impressive Symbolist works in the genre, and Denis created a few such works. Whether Charlot knew these is not known, but he seems to draw his inspiration directly from Breton art. Similarly, Denis used sculpted frames—e.g., for *La Vocation des Apôtres*, 1906—but I do not know details of his practice or whether Charlot knew them.
- ¹⁵³ Interview November 6, 1970. Charlot was in error in the interview in dating this wood sculpture to the same period as the *Chemin de Croix*.
- ¹⁵⁴ The sculpture attributed to Charlot in Koprivitza and Garduño 1994: 95, is, I believe, by Mardonio Magaña.
- ¹⁵⁵ My memory is that Odette told me she had sent the panel itself to my father, cutting it in half for shipping. In any case, he never received such a panel.

¹⁵⁶ *Christ Carrying His Cross, with rich border*, gouache on paper, 7-1/2" X 4-3/4." Charlot wrote ("Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work"): "1916-17. for polychrome wood carving. Visitation was carved. Photo exists." I added to this "probably carved it. Highly colored." The photograph he refers to was sent to him by Odette.

¹⁵⁷ *Kneeling Angel*, pencil on paper, 14-3/4" wide X 7-1/2" high, irregular shape. The photograph is black and white, 3-1/2" high X 5-1/2" wide.

¹⁵⁸ *Sketch of a Multi-Panel Altar Piece*, pencil and wash on paper, 8" high X 10-1/4" wide. On the verso, Charlot is calculating the dimensions of this artwork and perhaps others.

¹⁵⁹ *Haloed Woman with Deer*, 125 cm high X 48-1/2 cm wide X 3-3/5 cm thick; David Charlot Collection. No recognizable preparatory sketches have survived.

¹⁶⁰ Morse 1976: 88 f. At the end of his life, Charlot tried to create a lithograph using a Nabi technique, but the printing was too heavy:

I was trying to do what Maurice Denis does with his pale lithographs: using the paper, not as a contrast, but as a transition to the light colors. I don't blame Kistler for printing it more strongly, for it is the first print I have ever tried that way. (Morse number 713)

See Adhémar 1971: 20 f., on the Nabis' lithographs.

¹⁶¹ *Three Drawings for Head of Christ* (Morse 1), 1916: (a) black ink, 4-1/2" high X 4" wide; (b) blue wash, 5-1/4" high X 4-1/4" wide; (c) pencil, 5-1/2" high X 4-1/2" wide.

¹⁶² E.g., Frèches-Thory and Terrasse 1991: 213 f.

¹⁶³ *Profile of Madame Le Nohan*, pencil, 3-1/16" high X 2-7/10" wide, irregular shape, Juillet 1916 (done at the same time as the next). *Le père Le Nohan*, pencil, 4-3/4" high/ base 6-1/2"/ top 3-1/4", dated Juillet 1916. "Jean Charlot's Notes on Early French Work." See also Interview October 31, 1970.

¹⁶⁴ *Village and Field*, pencil or crayon and wash, 6-1/4" wide X 3-3/4" high, dated July 1916.

¹⁶⁵ *Louis Goupil*, pencil, 14-3/4" high X 10-1/2" wide, undated, probably early 1916.

¹⁶⁶ *Louis Goupil*, pencil and wash, 14-3/4" high X 10-1/2" wide. Charlot has written on it in two later hands: "1916?" and "Louis Goupil."

¹⁶⁷ *Bearded Man in Profile*, charcoal and wash, 14-3/4" high X 11-3/4" wide, dated 1916 or 1917 by Charlot. *Bearded Man with Hat in Profile*, charcoal and wash, 14-3/4" high X 10-3/4" wide, dated 1916 or 1917 by Charlot.