

JEAN CHARLOT AS PAUL CLAUDEL'S IXTLILXOCHITL

JOHN CHARLOT

In his book *Au Milieu des Vitraux de l'Apocalypse*, Paul Claudel begins a long conversation with a young artist to whom he gives a Náhuatl name: “*un ami très gentil . . . un artiste Mexicain appelé Ixtlilxochitl*” [a very nice friend . . . a Mexican artist called Ixtlilxóchitl].¹ The editors of the book and others have guessed that this artist was Jean Charlot, “*peintre français travaillant au Mexique; Claudel, qui s’est lié avec lui, le voit beaucoup en 1930 et 1931*” [french painter working in Mexico; Claudel, who became attached to him, sees him often in 1930 and 1931].²

Jean Charlot himself made this identification when given a photocopy of the passage, which he examined very closely.³ By comparing the reference to *Foutchéou* on page 271 to Claudel’s published journal, he dated the passage generally to March 1930.⁴ Claudel’s description on page 249 of “Ixtlilxóchitl’s” work is clearly that accomplished by Charlot at Chichén Itzá in 1926–1928:

“Ixtlilxochitl est au service d’une Société Scientifique Américaine qui déblaie les villes englouties du Yucatan. C’est lui qui recopie avec soin les sculptures et les

¹ Claudel 1966: 248–270, 366–401

² Claudel 1966: 366. See also Claudel 1968: 1439, note 5 to page 842, in which the quoted description of Charlot by Claudel is similar to that of “Ixtlilxóchitl.” Also Labriolle 1972: 225.

³ All papers and unpublished sources referred to in this article are deposited in The Jean Charlot Collection, The Thomas Hale Hamilton Library, The University of Hawai’i at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawai’i. The photocopy is mistakenly titled by Charlot “*A Travers les Vitraux de L’Apocalypse ‘Ixtlilxochitl.’*”

⁴ Charlot’s photocopy: 270. Claudel 1968: 904. This dating is reinforced by the February date suggested in Claudel 1966: 401, note 269; 1968: 900. The reference to “*Les Plaies d’Egypte*,” *Bibliographie* 1973: 1931, no. 14, must be to a manuscript. Claudel and Charlot were working on their projected book on the Apocalypse, of which the article was a fragment, and Claudel was passing manuscripts to Charlot; Mira Baciu interviews with Jean Charlot: *Bande I*, I (see below, note 8).

peintures des temples Maya avant que leurs teintes délicates se soient évanouies.” [Ixtlilxochitl works for an American Scientific Society that is excavating the engulfed cities of Yucatan. It is he who carefully recopies the works of sculpture and painting of the Mayan temples before their delicate colors disappear].

Next to Claudel’s evocative description of the archeologists on page 250, Charlot has written “Chichen Itza.” Charlot had in fact come to the United States to assist in the publication of the report of the expedition, co-authored with Earl H. and Ann Axtell Morris, for the Carnegie Institution of Washington.⁵ He wrote on his photocopy of Claudel’s passage: “*Le thème archéologique*: I gave PC our mss. *pour* “Temple of The Warriors” report on Chichen Itza” [The archeological theme: I gave PC our mss. for ‘Temple of the Warriors’ report on Chichen Itza].⁶ That archeological theme is directly related to the project on which Claudel and “Ixtlilxóchitl” are cooperating, the interpretation of the prophetic book of the Apocalypse. That is, just as “Ixtlilxóchitl” had reconstructed an ancient civilization from its fragmentary remains, so now he and Claudel must construct the form the future will take—“*les monuments de l’avenir*” [the monuments of the future]—on the basis of the fragmentary Biblical prophecies.⁷ Specifically, Claudel was writing the book under discussion, and Charlot was preparing under his direction the series of illustrations, which has yet to be published.⁸

Conclusive proof of the identity of Charlot and “Ixtlilxóchitl” is however available in The Jean Charlot Collection, in an item overlooked by Charlot himself when studying the passage. Claudel had dedicated to Charlot the issue of *Commerce* in which appeared a section from his work on the Apocalypse, “*Les Cinq Premières Plaies d’Égypte*,” with the following words: “*A mon ami Ixtli* (x erased) *lxochitl*, *affectionnément*, P. Claudel, W. le 23 Janvier 32” [To my friend Ixtli (x erased) lxochitl, with affection, P. Claudel, W., January 23, 1932].⁹

The nickname is significant of the relation between the collaborators at the time and their differing attitudes towards non-Christian religions and provides an unexpected example of the influence of Native American literature on Western culture.

Mesoamerica is one of the most culturally creative regions of the world. The Olmecs had created the first high civilization and were followed by—to name only the main groups—the Mayans, the inhabitants of Teotihuacán, the Toltecs, and finally the Aztecs. Originally from northern Mexico, the Náhuatl-speaking Aztecs had settled in the early 14th-century on lake Texcoco in central Mexico and, with the help of their more advanced neighbors and allies, created an empire centered on their capital Tenochtitlán (the later Mex-

⁵ References in Labriolle 1972:128, note 101.

⁶ Charlot’s photocopy: 270; “*mss. pour*” in shorthand. See the reference in Claudel 1966: 251, to Biblical verses as “*pareils à des briques à six faces*” [like six-sided bricks]; Charlot was copying column stones decorated on four sides. The reference on 250 to “*des fragments d’inscriptions et de sculpture*” [fragments of inscriptions and sculpture] is more general.

⁷ Claudel 1966: 248–251.

⁸ Baciu 1975. A transcription of over 150 pages, dated 1972, of Baciu’s interviews with Charlot on this subject is deposited in The Jean Charlot Collection.

⁹ See above, note 4. The copy of *Commerce* is in The Jean Charlot Collection. Sections of Claudel’s article have been marked with X’s in pencil by Charlot, perhaps with a view to illustrating them.

Robert Hayward Barlow, the historian and linguist of Mexico, from whom Charlot took advanced language instruction in the 1940s, apparently used another Náhuatl name for Charlot. In a letter dated October 8, 1947, he addresses him as Notlasohmawipiltin.

ico City). Basing themselves on earlier and neighboring cultures—notably that of Texcoco on the other side of the lake of the same name—they developed a monumental architecture and art, an extensive literature, and an extremely complicated religious system, recorded in large collections of codices.

This vast and highly cultured empire was conquered by the Spaniard Hernán Cortés in 1519-1521. Under Spanish rule, intensive efforts were made to convert the Indians to Roman Catholicism and to depreciate their ancient culture. During this long Colonial Period, however, certain individuals—Indian, Spanish, and even French—worked to preserve Aztec traditions and to win for them their due recognition. The work of these nativist writers and collectors became the basis on which the painters of the 20th-century Mexican Mural Renaissance could build their vision of Mexico as a culture distinctively formed by its Indian foundation.

Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, 1578(?) to 1650, was a nativist Aztec historian, descendant of the kings of Texcoco and the lords of Teotihuacán, whose important books have preserved much of the precontact history of his people as well as the Indian perspective on the events of the Conquest.¹⁰ The works of Ixtlilxóchitl constitute an important portion of the collection of Mexican antiquities donated to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris by Charlot's great-uncle, the part Aztec Eugène Goupil.¹¹ As a youth in Paris, Charlot studied this collection assiduously, along with other Mexican materials at his disposal.¹²

¹⁰ Ixtlilxóchitl (O'Gorman) 1975: 5-257. Also Boban 1891: index and especially vol. 1, 211-218. Garibay 1953-1954: index and especially vol. 2, 308-313. Martínez 1972: 139 ff. Dibble 1981: vol. 1, 1. The historian bore, in fact, an important family name, used by, among others, his great grandfather, Boban 1891: vol. 1, 211. I mention parenthetically that Charlot was a great admirer of the poetry of Ixtlilxóchitl's ancestor, Nezahualcōyotl, king of Texcoco; Martínez 1972: 11, 58, 139. The historicity of the tradition of Nezahualcōyotl as a poet and the attribution to him of works from the *Cantares Mexicanos* has recently been challenged by Bierhorst 1985: 55f. 101-105, 449.

¹¹ Boban 1891: index; Ixtlilxóchitl (O'Gorman) 1975: VIII, 237f. On the history of the collection, see Dibble 1981: vol. 1, 1-4. Goupil was the son of the French Victor Joseph Goupil and the Aztec Mariana Benita Melendez. Charlot himself was therefore one sixteenth Aztec.

¹² Jean Charlot 1963: 178ff. Charlot was initially denied access to the collection because of his age. His letter demanding admission, signed in the Spanish style, is worth quoting in full:

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 déssaisi 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 quittés 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.

November 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

With a view towards writing a full *catalogue raisonné* of the collection, Charlot made a number of copies of the art works along with notes from the texts. Among his surviving papers are thirty-two pages of notes, dated 1914 by Charlot, from Henri Ternaux-Compans' translation into French of Ixtlilxóchtl's history of the Chichimecs; the historical period recorded, Charlot noted on the copy made in 1972, "overlaps with events in mss."¹³

This study of Aztec antiquities was naturally of great importance for Charlot, who often credited it along with his Aztec racial heritage, for a major direction in his life, art and thought.¹⁴ The influence on Charlot of Ixtlilxóchtl, along with other similar sources, can be readily seen in two areas. First, Charlot chose as the subject of his first fresco a subject that dramatically illustrates the nativist view of the Conquest: the unprovoked massacre of Indians in the temple of Mexico by Pedro de Alvarado and his men, downplayed and even excused by the Spanish historian Bernal Díaz del Castillo, but emphatically condemned by Ixtlilxóchtl.¹⁵

This nativist perspective provided not only the subject matter, but also the positive view of the Aztecs and the correspondingly negative view of the Spaniards, "robot knights

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,

A fragmentary marginal note reads: "*le signature . . . en effet neveu de . . . Goupil, il semble qu'on . . . (n) peut lui refuser une carte*" [the signature . . . in fact the nephew of . . . Goupil, it seems that we . . . cannot refuse him a card]. Jean Charlot 1963: 179, is either thinking of another occasion or in error when he gives his age as 13. He would have been 16 at the time of the above letter.

¹³ Jean Charlot mss. "Notes for Catalogue Raisonné of Pre-Hispanic Codices in Goupil Collection," *Ternaux-Compans* 1837-1841. See also Boban 1891: vol. 1, 61; Martínez 1972: 155.

¹⁴ I do not discuss artistic influence in this article, but will note that Charlot's copies of the codex figures are generally more understanding of the Aztec style than those in the non-photographic illustrations in Boban 1891. Certain visual reminiscences of the Boban 1891 *Atlas* can be found in Charlot's later work; reminiscences only, because after leaving France in 1920, he did not, until late in life, again possess a copy. *Planche* No. 17, *Le Grand Teocalli de Mexico*, from a codex attributed to Ixtlilxóchtl, has clearly influenced Charlot's illustration of the same subject in Martínez del Río 1935: 150. The heavily armored Spanish conquistadors, e.g., *Planche* No. 64, may have influenced Charlot's first fresco mural, *Massacre in the Main Temple*, in the Escuela Preparatoria, Mexico, D. F., completed January 1923. Such figures can however be found in other works, such as Sahagún. Charlot used Mexican Indian art also in his illustrations for Claudel's projected book on the Apocalypse; Baciu interviews with Charlot: *Bande* II, XII; *Bande* IV and V, VI, XI (compared with Medieval Christian sculpture); *Bande* VI, Vf., XII; *Bande* VIII, XV; *Bande* X, VII; *Bande* XI, VIIIff. Besides much scholarly work in Mexican history and art, Charlot wrote a play in Náhuatl, *Mowentihke Chalman, Los Peregrinos de Chalma, Pieza Para Muñecos*, presented in the villages of Mexico in 1948, and published in 1969; John Charlot 1977: 65, note 1.

¹⁵ Díaz del Castillo 1944: vol. 2, 68-73; vol. 3, 275ff. Ixtlilxóchtl 1975: 389, 453. The latter reference is to a passage in the thirteenth section of *Compendio histórico del reino de Texcoco*, extracted for publication in 1829 under the appropriate and now well known title *Horribles Crueldades de los conquistadores de México y de los indios que los auxiliaron para subyugarlo a la corona de Castilla* [*Horrible Cruelties of the Conquistadors of Mexico and of the Indians that helped them to subdue it to the crown of Castile*]; translated in 1838 by Ternaux-Compans *Cruautés horribles . . .*; Ixtlilxóchtl (O'Gorman) 1975: 248. Ixtlilxóchtl emphasises the points made later by Charlot: the religious and peaceful character of the Indians' celebration and dance, the esthetic quality of their costumes ("*sobre sí cada uno de ellos las mejores joyas y preseas que tenéan, sin armas ni defensa ninguna*") [each one of them wore the best jewels and ornaments they possessed, without weapons or any defense], and the cruelty and injustice of the Spaniards. The "jewels" in Charlot's fresco are in fact imbedded brass rings.

trampling upon Indian victims,"¹⁶ a perspective followed in subsequent works by others in the Mexican Mural Renaissance. This appreciation of the native side of contact history later informed Charlot's perception both of North American Indian and Hawaiian history.¹⁷

Charlot's pro-Aztec view had of course a very broad foundation and indeed came to him as a birthright and family heritage. Eugène Goupil in his preface to the catalogue of his own collection writes: "*Né au Mexique, de père français et de mère mexicaine—descendante des Aztèques, en ligne directe, du côté maternel,—j'aime tendrement mon pays natal*" [Born in Mexico of a French father and a Mexican mother—descendant of the Aztecs, in direct line, on my mother's side,—I love with tenderness my native land].¹⁸ The collection was made as "*un pieux hommage à la mémoire de ma mère . . .*" [a pious homage to the memory of my mother . . .].

Similarly, the Mexicanologist and family friend, Auguste Génin, writes in his prefatory letter to the same work: "*né comme lui (Goupil) au Mexique, j'aime ardemment . . . la patrie mexicaine . . . le noble pays trop longtemps méconnu . . . nous aimons ton histoire pleine de mystère, de sang et de vaillance! . . . votre profonde poésie, votre beauté sauvage, votre charme ou votre majesté . . .*" [born like him (Goupil) in Mexico, I love ardently . . . the Mexican fatherland . . . the noble land too long unknown . . . we love your history full of mystery, of blood and courage! . . . your profound poetry, your savage beauty, your charm or your majesty . . .].¹⁹ The collection will thus aid in the reevaluation of Aztec culture. Génin praises Goupil and Boban for doing work as important in its way as that of such historians as Sahagún and Ixtlilxóchitl.²⁰ Génin in his *Poèmes Aztèques* expresses—with significant emphasis on Texcoco—a basically positive view of Aztec culture, arguing that its negative aspects have been exaggerated and the crimes of the Spanish conquerors ignored.²¹

This family sympathy, respect and admiration for native cultures, especially in contact with Western culture, remained always a major characteristic of Charlot's life, work and thought.²² In this as in other views and sympathies of his,²³ he differed markedly from the Roman Catholicism of his milieu, a Catholicism of which Claudel was a most prestigious and extreme spokesman. The pro-Catholic rhetoric of Claudel based itself strongly on the denigration or trivialization of all those who did not adhere to his party, in whatever religion or culture. Charlot recalled in 1972: "*Il était assez intransigent avec les gens qui avaient d'autres idées que lui . . . il avait, on pourrait dire, ses haines. Il n'aimait pas Nietzsche, il n'aimait pas Voltaire, il n'aimait pas Marcel Proust . . .*" [He was rather intransigent with

¹⁶ Jean Charlot 1963: 154. Jean Charlot 1938: Lecture VI. discusses in detail the composition of this mural. He emphasizes the large number of reasons, historical, philosophical and compositional, for the work. I do not mean to imply in my text that Ixtlilxóchitl was the only influence on Charlot.

¹⁷ Jean Charlot 1972. John Charlot 1977: 66f.

¹⁸ Boban 1891: vol. 1, VII. See also XIII. f.

¹⁹ Boban 1891: vol. 1, XII.

²⁰ Boban 1891: vol. 1, XIV.

²¹ Génin 1890: e.g., 11, 20-23, 147f., 166-169 (the copy in The Jean Charlot Collection was inscribed by Génin to Goupil). In both works cited, Génin emphasizes the closeness of Mexico and France; e.g., Génin 1890: 169f., a comparison between Vercingetorix and Cuautémoc, both "*martyres de la liberté*" [martyrs of liberty], who, after humiliating captivity, died at the hands of the invaders of their fatherlands.

²² John Charlot: 1976.

²³ John Charlot: 1983.

people who had ideas other than his . . . he had, one could say, his hates. He did not like Nietzsche, he did not like Voltaire, he did not like Marcel Proust . . .].²⁴

This marked difference in attitude necessarily became apparent soon after their first meeting on December 14, 1928.²⁵ As stated earlier, Charlot was helping to edit the report of the Carnegie archeological expedition to Chichén Itzá and also to “prepare annual display, including ours, from diggings.” On December 16, he took Claudel to that display: “*Claudel à Carnegie (exhibition). Tout lui montrer. Dr. Merriam (President Carn. Inst.) me remercie de l’avoir amené*” [Claudel to Carnegie (exhibition). Show him everything. Dr. Merriam (President Carn. Inst.) thanks me for having brought him]. On December 20, Charlot reported in his diary: “*3h. chancellerie. P.C. bonne conversation sur la prière, anciennes religions comparées*” [3:00 P.M., embassy. P.C. good conversation on prayer, ancient religions compared].

Claudel’s first mention of Charlot in his journal expresses his response to these discussions:

“Le peintre français du Mexique Jean Charlot. Les temples à pyramides du Mexique. Sacrifices humains au Soleil. Comm(union) avec le coeur de la victime. Majesté splendide” [The French painter of Mexico Jean Charlot. The pyramidal temples of Mexico. Human sacrifices to the Sun. Comm(union) with the heart of the victim. Splendid majesty].²⁶

This positive description of Aztec religion is astonishingly close to the negative one in *Le Livre de Christophe Colomb*, quoted by Charlot in his account of these discussions:

“Il travaillait au Christophe Colomb. Me demande d’illustrer les dieux Mexicains pour le pré-original publié dans le Forum, Août 1929. Il aimait les noms, Huichlipochtli, Quetzalcoatl, Ixtlipetzloc.

‘Hélas! Hélas! depuis qu’on ne veut plus là-bas de Baal et d’Apollon je m’étais retiré au Mexique et j’y étais si heureux! Hélas! Hélas C’est fini de mes grands repas de chair humaine! C’est fini de la grande chaudière Aztèque! Ce coeur pantelant que le prêtre debout sur une montagne de cadavres retirait des entrailles de sa victime, que c’était bon!’

Moi un peu choqué de voir mes dieux ancestraux maltraité”

[He was working on the *Christopher Columbus*. Asked me to illustrate the Mex-

²⁴ Baciu interviews with Charlot: *Bande I, II*. See also *Bande II, VII*; *Bande XII, IV*: “*ces idées à la fois positives et négatives, et je crois que la partie négative ne m’appartient pas. C’est entièrement à Claudel . . .*” [these ideas at one and the same time positive and negative, and I believe that the negative part does not belong to me. It is entirely Claudel’s . . .]; *VIII*f.; *XII*: “*Ces pauvres gens que Claudel n’aimait pas . . .*” [These poor people that Claudel did not like . . .]; *XIX*f.

²⁵ See the excellent discussion in Labriolle 1972: 57, 59f., 123f., 128–136. She is however in error on the reason for their first meeting, 128; Charlot did not approach Claudel “*de la part de la Revue The Forum*” [on behalf of the journal, *The Forum*], but merely, bearing a letter of introduction from the French consul in Mexico, to pay his respects to a great poet whom he had admired ardently since his youth. Baciu interviews with Charlot: *Bande I, I*: “*la première chose qu’il m’a demandé, parceque je venais du Mexique, c’était d’illustrer un passage du Christophe Colomb qui avait à faire avec les dieux mexicains. Dans le Forum . . .* [the first thing that he asked me, because I was coming from Mexico, was to illustrate a passage of the *Christopher Columbus* that had to do with the Mexican gods. In *The Forum* . . .]. Unless otherwise noted, the following information and quotations from Charlot are taken from two unpublished sources: “Notes for a talk on Claudel, 11/24/70” and “Diary Entries,” a transcription of entries relating to Claudel.

²⁶ Claudel 1968: 842.

ican gods for the pre-original published in *Forum*, August 1929. He liked the names, H̄uichlipochtli, Quetzalcoatl, Ixtlipetzloc].

‘Alas! Alas! since the time they stopped wanting any more of Baal and Apollo down below, I had retired to Mexico, and I was so happy there! Alas! Alas! It’s finished, my big dinners of human flesh! It’s finished, the big Aztec boiling pot! That pulsing heart that the priest standing on a mountain of cadavers would pull from the entrails of his victim, how good it was!’

I a little shocked to see my ancestral gods mistreated].²⁷

Charlot is citing scene 17 of the *Première Partie*, which was to be published in English as “The Gods Churn the Sea” in *The Forum*, illustrated by Charlot.²⁸ That scene is Claudel’s depiction of the benighted America before the arrival of Christianity: “Hideous temples . . . foul, gory gods of darkness, the diseased, blood-thirsty monsters.”²⁹ As Charlot remarks, Claudel amused himself with the divine names: “Where is Rxtxchtl—Hrktxkchtl?—the plague take them! I wonder who makes the names for them. It makes my throat peel!”³⁰ The text of Claudel’s journal and that of the play mention the same subjects—temples, human sacrifice, Aztec religion—but in extreme opposite evaluative terms. The former expresses Claudel’s response to Charlot’s discussion; the latter, Claudel’s particular type of pro-Catholic rhetoric.

Charlot told me several times that he was hurt by Claudel’s making fun of the names of the Aztec gods because they were, after all, “relatives.” He said that he considered Claudel’s view very limited and tried to give him a greater understanding and broader sympathy. In this sense, he was Ixtlilxóchtli, arguing the Aztec case against the received prejudice of Europe.

Claudel, as seen in his journal, responded positively to Charlot’s views, but they could not be assimilated into his rhetoric. Any changes in later editions of *Le Livre de Christophe Colomb* do not alter the image of the Aztec gods.³¹ In fact, both in the article

²⁷ Charlot is quoting with minor variants from the text used in Claudel 1930a: 41.

²⁸ Claudel 1929. Labriolle 1972: 123f.

²⁹ Claudel 1929: 95.

³⁰ Claudel 1929: 95. Compare Claudel 1930a: 39, “*Je me demande où ils sont allés trouver des noms comme ça*” [I wonder where they went to find names like that].

³¹ See *Bibliographie* 1973 for all editions. Similarly, in the discussion in Claudel 1966, “Ixtlilxóchtli” is absorbed into Claudel’s rhetoric and reveals little of Charlot’s thinking. “Ixtlilxóchtli” begins as a strawman (Claudel can answer him easily enough, 256, “*La terre n’est pas le paradis. L’Eglise militante n’est pas l’Eglise triomphante*” [The earth is not paradise. The church militant is not the church triumphant]), and ends as a yes-man (258, “*Vous touchez un point, me dit Ixtlilxochitl, sur lequel je suis d’accord avec vous*” [You touch on a point, Ixtlilxóchtli says to me, on which I agree with you]; 261, “*C’est vrai*” [It’s true]; 263, “*Parfait! Je n’y vois pas d’inconvénient*” [Perfect! I see no objection to that]; Claudel says to him, 261, “*permettez-moi d’apporter à votre opinion, qui est la mienne . . .*” [permit me to add to your opinion, which is mine as well . . .]; also 264, 267–270), and a mere interviewer (259, “*Qu’est-ce que cela veut dire?*” [What does that mean?]). “Ixtlilxóchtli” becomes at times Claudel’s *alter ego*; he refers familiarly to China, 253; quotes and translates from the Latin Bible, which Charlot never did, 254, 262ff. (also Baciu interviews with Jean Charlot, *Bande XIII*, III: Charlot’s recollection of Claudel’s enjoyment of the Latin translation of a certain text); and speaks with characteristically Claudelian disrespect of other religions and views, 255f., 260, 264f., statements identical to those Claudel puts into his own mouth, 264. An image put into “Ixtlilxóchtli”’s mouth on 256, “*jonchée de corps morts*” [dead bodies strewn about] appears thereafter in Claudel’s: 260, “*jonchée de soldats*” [soldiers strewn about]; 263, “*entassements de foules . . . empilements de chair humaine*” [heaps of crowds . . . piles of human flesh]; 268, “*jonchée de ruines et de cadavres*” [ruins and cadavers strewn about]. A passage from Claudel’s *Journal* is also put into “Ixtlilxóchtli”’s mouth, 269f. “Ixtlilxóchtli” addresses Claudel as familiarly as Claudel addresses him, 255, 261, which

and in the later illustrated American edition of *The Book of Christopher Columbus*, Charlot expressed Claudel's view in images, in his curious role as Claudel's "medium" for the visual arts, a cooperation that he felt resulted in works that were more Claudel's than his own.³² Charlot expressed clearly his own perspective and personal feelings only in such illustrations as the positive view of Mexico as mother earth with a cornucopia of possible converts (the illustration contradicts the text on the previous page),³³ and the major illustrations of the horrible cruelties of the Spaniards (supported by only a few lines of the text).³⁴

differs strongly from the Claudel-Charlot correspondence, in which Charlot always maintained a respectful address. Much less credible therefore is the sassiness of "Ixtlilxóchitl" towards Claudel, 269f. The only points made in the conversation that resemble Charlot's known views are the emphasis on the visible, 252f., which is however linked with Claudel's characteristic triumphalism (Baciu interviews with Charlot, *Bande IV* and *V*, *VI*; Charlot remembered Claudel as more spiritualist than materialist in his conception of the post-resurrection state, *Bande X*, XIVf.); and a passage put into the mouth of Claudel, 259: "*Qu'a-t-il besoin d'une tunique celui que Dieu s'apprête à revêtir mieux que Salomon?*" [What need has he of a tunic whom God is ready to clothe better than Solomon?].

³² See Labriolle reference above, note 25, on this curious relation. Baciu interview with Charlot, *Bande I*, II: "*il voulait que je sois un peu ce qu'on appelle un espèce de 'medium,' seulement c'était un dessinateur et je devais passer ses idées dans les illustrations et je l'aimais beaucoup, et j'ai fait ça, on pourrait dire, pour lui, par amour, et il y a bien des choses là-dedans que je n'aurais pas moi-même ou conçues ou dessinées . . . j'ai essayé d'être un médium pour l'esprit et les désirs de Claudel et dans un sens j'ai réussi. Dans ce même sens, il n'y a rien d'autre dans mon oeuvre qui ressemble à ces dessins de l'Apocalypse*" [he wanted me to be a little what one calls a sort of 'medium,' only it was a draughtsman, and I had to pass his ideas into illustrations. I loved him very much, and I did that, one could say, for him, out of love, and there are many things in there that I would not myself have either thought of or drawn . . . I tried to be a medium for the spirit and desires of Claudel and in a sense I succeeded. In this same sense, there is nothing else in my work that resembles those drawings of the Apocalypse]; *IV*: "*l'Apocalypse a été publié . . . sans illustrations . . . ça donne une partie de son idée, mais pas toute son idée, parce qu'il avait des idées qui devaient être représentées par des images, et ces images, naturellement, c'est moi qui a été la main, si vous voulez, qui a dessiné les images que Claudel avait pensés. Nous avons quelques petits dessins . . . de Claudel qui sont, on pourrait dire, presque informes, si on ne sait pas ce que c'est, mais qui pour moi sont très précieux, parce qu'il les dessinait en même temps qu'il m'expliquait ses idées*" [The Apocalypse was published . . . without illustrations . . . that gives a part of his idea, but not all his idea, because he had ideas that needed to be represented by images, and those images, naturally, it was I who was the hand, if you want, that drew the images that Claudel had thought of. We have several little drawings . . . of Claudel, which are, one could say, almost without form, if one doesn't know what it is, but which for me are very precious because he drew them himself while he was explaining to me his ideas]; *Bande II*, *VI*: "*Alors la main, c'est moi, et l'esprit, c'est Claudel!*" (So the hand is me, and the spirit is Claudel); *XI*f.; *Bande IX*, *I*f.f.; *Bande X*, *I*. Claudel found the collaboration very satisfactory. In his letter to Charlot of July 27, 1929, he writes, "*J'ai reçu le no. du Forum ce matin. L'illustration me semble très réussie . . .*" [I have received the issue of *The Forum* this morning. The illustration seems very successful to me]. Charlot's feelings were ambivalent. In an interview with Baciu, *Bande XI*, *VIII*f., he said: "*je crois que Claudel voulait représenter la vie païenne, et j'étais intéressé naturellement comme archéologue en représentant les choses que nous avons vu dans les mines du Yucatan . . . à Chichén Itza . . . nous voyons des prêtres avec leur oriflamme, les belles moulures classiques, on pourrait dire, de l'époque Maya, et des Dieux. Il y a un Dieu qui est dans un serpent, le Koukoulkan, il y a le dieux du soleil qui vient du disque du soleil, et il y a aussi un sacrifice humain. Je crois que j'ai mis le sacrifice humain là parce que ça aurait fait plaisir à Claudel de savoir que ces gens là n'étaient pas civilisés comme nous le sommes, ou civilisés d'une façon différente*" [I believe that Claudel wanted to represent pagan life, and I was interested naturally as an archeologist in representing the things we had seen in the excavations in Yucatan . . . at Chichén Itzá . . . we see priests with their decorative banner, the beautiful classical mouldings, one could say, of the Mayan epoch, and the Gods. There is a God who is in a serpent, Kukulcan, there is a god of the sun who comes from the disk of the sun, and there is also a human sacrifice. I believe that I put the human sacrifice there because that would have given pleasure to Claudel to know that those people were not civilized as we are, or civilized in a different way]. Claudel and Charlot went on to collaborate on a number of projects, *Bibliographie* 1973: 1934, no. 24; 1946, no. 38. Omitted is Jean Charlot: 1933. Compare Charlot's collaboration with J. Eric Thompson, John Charlot 1977: 74, note 52.

³³ Claudel 1930b: 33; also 35, "unhealthy lands."

³⁴ Claudel 1930b: 42f.; 35, "The savages, harshly treated, many times slaughtered the invaders, who took hideous reprisals," *Labriolle* 1972: 133.

Claudél's positive view of Mexican culture appeared only once—to my knowledge—before the publication of his journal. In “Jean Charlot,” published in the catalog of an exhibition of the artist's works and reprinted in Claudél's *Jean Charlot*, he wrote:

Le milieu dans lequel Jean Charlot a satisfait à sa vocation est le Mexique, j'entends le vieux Mexique Indien. Il n'en était pas de plus favorable à un constructeur. Un des thèmes que notre ami ne se lasse pas d'interpréter est celui des maçons Maïas à l'oeuvre sur l'une des pyramides sacrées du Yucatan ou du Guatemala qu'il a autrefois explorées, Chichen Itza et Macanxoc. Mais une autre architecture obéissante à la même inspiration, j'allais dire à la même levée, que la musculature de cette terre d'azur et de cuivre, a mis puissamment ensemble ces dés et ces cylindres de chair sombre, ces membres lourds qui s'ajustent, cette longue phrase d'étoffes et de chairs qui se développe sur tout un groupe, et que l'imagination ni le regard, pas plus que l'ambiance qui les nourrit ne suffisent à épuiser. La couleur chez lui aussi est un élément architectural et le jaune par exemple dans une certaine proportion soutient le rose, comme un arc supporte le bandeau” [The milieu in which Jean Charlot has satisfied his vocation is Mexico, I mean the old Indian Mexico. There was no milieu more favorable for a constructor. One of the themes that our friend does not tire of interpreting is that of the Mayan masons at work on one of the sacred pyramids of Yucatan or Guatemala, which he had formerly explored, Chichén Itzá and Macanxoc. But another architecture obeying the same inspiration—I was going to say the same upsurge—as the musculature of this land of azure and copper, has put together powerfully these cubes and cylinders of dark skin, these heavy members that adjust themselves to each other, this long sentence of materials and skins that develops over a whole group, and which neither the imagination nor the gaze—no more than the environment that nourishes them—suffices to exhaust. His color also is an architectural element, and yellow for instance in a certain proportion supports the rose as an arch supports the string-course].³⁵

In this text, the temples are once again not “hideous.”

Charlot wrote Claudél—who had been annoyed that Charlot had more or less insisted on a piece for his catalogue—that “*Votre texte nous a été d'une aide précieuse, et m'a bien aidé à mettre mes idées en ordre par rapport à moi-même*” [Your text was for us a precious aid and helped me put my ideas about myself in order].³⁶

The meeting of Claudél and Charlot thus produced a curious bifurcation in the work of each. Charlot maintained throughout his own views, but served as the “medium” for the expression of Claudél's very different opinions. Claudél in his major works cleaved to his rhetorical depreciation of all that was not his type of Roman Catholicism, but, in minor texts, he revealed that through Charlot, his “*Ixtlilxóchitl*,” he had been imbued with some understanding of and appreciation for Aztec culture.

³⁵ Claudél 1931a: 3, 5 (the Whitall translation, 4, 6); 1931b: 4f. The passage is quoted in part by Labriolle 1972: 129.

³⁶ Undated, after April 26 and in all likelihood before May 16, 1931. See also Claudél's letters of April 26 and May 21. Claudél surprised Charlot with Claudél 1931b, which, I feel, may have been a peace offering; see Claudél's letters to Charlot of April 26 and May 21, 1931.

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