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LITERATURE, CRITICAL THEORY, AND POLITICS

MUTE SPEECH

JACQUES RANCIÈRE

TRANSLATED BY JAMES SWENSON
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY GABRIEL ROCKHILL

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CHAPTER 1

FROM REPRESENTATION TO EXPRESSION

LET US return to the stone wall and refuge of silence. Blanchot, in fact, did not invent the metaphors he uses to celebrate the purity of literary experience, and the valorization of purity is not their only possible use. These same metaphors have often served to denounce the perversion inherent in that purity. They thus structure Sartre's arguments expressing both fascination and contempt for Flaubert and Mallarmé. Sartre continually denounces Flaubert's infatuation with poems in dead languages, "words of stone falling from the lips of statues," or the Mallarméan poem's "column of silence blossoming alone in some secluded garden." He valorizes a literature of expository speech, in which the word serves as an intermediary between an author and a reader, in opposition to a literature in which the means becomes an end, in which speech is no longer the act of a subject but a mute soliloquy: "Language is present when someone speaks, otherwise it is dead—words neatly arranged in a dictionary. These poems uttered by no one, which seem like bouquets of flowers or arrangements of jewels selected for their harmonizing colors, are in fact pure silence."[1] We might think that Sartre is responding to Blanchot and, therefore, quite naturally uses his vocabulary. But this critique of literary "petrification" has a much longer history. When Sartre denounces,

from a political and revolutionary viewpoint, the sacrifice of human speech and action to the prestige of a petrified language, he paradoxically takes up the accusations that the literary and political traditionalists of the nineteenth century continually leveled against each generation of literary innovators. Whether in opposition to the images of Hugolian "Romanticism," the descriptions of Flaubertian "realism," or the arabesques of Mallarméan "symbolism," it was always the primacy of living and acting speech that the traditionalists upheld. In *What is Literature?*, Sartre sets up an opposition between a poetry that uses words intransitively, as a painter uses colors, and a literature that uses words to show and to prove. This opposition between an art that paints and an art that demonstrates was similarly already a leitmotiv of nineteenth-century criticism. It is the argument Charles de Rémusat made against Hugo when he denounced a literature that "ceases to serve as the instrument of a fruitful idea and isolates itself from the causes it ought to defend [...] in order to become an art that is independent of anything it might express, a particular, *sui generis* power that looks only within itself for its life, its goals, and its glory." Barbey d'Aurevilly made the argument against Flaubert: the realist "only wants painterly books" and rejects "any book whose purpose is to *prove* something." Finally, this argument is also at the core of Léon Bloy's great denunciation of the "literary idolatry" that sacrifices the Verb to the cult of the sentence.[2] In order to understand this recurrent denunciation of literary "petrification" and its metamorphoses, we must thus break through the convenient barrier erected by Sartre between the pantheist naivety of the Romantic age, when "animals spoke and books were taken down directly from the lips of God," and the post-1848 disenchantment of disabused aesthetes. We must grasp this theme at its origin, in the very moment when the power of speech immanent in every living being and the power of life immanent in every stone are first affirmed.

Let us begin at the beginning, that is, the battle over "Romanticism." The first thing that got the partisans of Voltaire and La Harpe riled up against Hugo was not the "hidden/staircase [*escalier/dérobé*]" and other enjambments of *Hernani* or the "liberty cap" he put on the old dictionary. It was the identification of the power of the poem with that of a language of stone. Witness the incisive analysis given by Gustave Planche of the work that, much more than *Hernani*, symbolizes the scandal of the new school, *Notre-Dame de Paris*:

> In this unique and monstrous work, man and stone come together and form a single body. Man beneath the ogive is like moss on a wall or lichen on an oak. Under Monsieur Hugo's pen, stone comes to life and seems to follow all human passions. The imagination, dazzled at first, believes it is witnessing the expansion of the realm of thought and the conquest of matter by intelligent life. But it is soon undeceived, seeing that matter has remained as it was but that man has been petrified. The guivres and salamanders carved on the cathedral's walls have remained immobile while the blood that had flowed in man's veins suddenly froze; his breathing stopped, the eye no longer sees and the free agent has fallen to the level of stone without having raised it toward himself.[3]

The "petrification" spoken of by Hugo's critic does not stem from a posture the writer may have adopted, a choice to silence his voice. Properly speaking, it is the opposition of one poetics to another, an opposition that expresses the break of *Romantic* novelty not only with the formal rules of belles lettres but with their very spirit. What opposes these two poetics is a different idea of the relation between thought and matter that constitutes the poem and of the language that is the site of this relation. If we refer back to the classical terms of poetics—the *inventio* that concerns the choice of subject, the *dispositio* that arranges its parts, and the *elocutio* that gives the discourse its appropriate ornaments—the new poetics that triumphs in Hugo's novel can be characterized as an overturning of the system that gave them order and hierarchy. Classical *inventio* defined the poem, in Aristotle's terms, as an arrangement of actions, a representation of men in action. It is important that we see clearly the implications of the strange procedure of putting the cathedral in the place of the arrangement of human actions. *Notre-Dame de Paris* certainly does tell a story, knots together and then resolves the destiny of its characters. But the title of the book is not thereby merely an indication of the time and place where the story occurs. It defines these adventures as another incarnation of what the cathedral itself expresses in the distribution of its spaces and the iconography or relief of its sculptures. It stages its characters as figures drawn from the stone and the meaning it incarnates. To accomplish this Hugo's sentences animate the stone, make it speak and act. If *elocution* formerly was subject to *inventio*, giving the represented agents of the action the expression appropriate to their character and their circumstances, it now emancipates itself from this tutelage, to the profit of the power of speech granted to the new object of the poem, and takes its mistress's place. But, as Planche tells us, this omnipotence of language is also a reversal of its internal hierarchy: henceforth it will be the "material part" of language—words with their sonorous and imagistic power—that takes the place of the "intellectual part"—the syntax that subordinates those words to the expression of thought and to the logical order of an action.

Planche's analysis allows us to understand what is at stake in Hugolian "petrification," namely the overturning of a poetic system. It also allows us to

reconstitute the system thus reversed, the system of representation, as it had been set forth during the preceding century in treatises by Batteux, Marmontel, and La Harpe, or as it inspired Voltaire's commentaries on Corneille. The system of representation in fact consisted less in formal rules than in their spirit, that is, in a particular idea of the relations between speech and action. Four great principles animated the poetics of representation. The first, established in the first chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics*, is the principle of fiction. The essence of the poem is not found in the use of a more or less harmonious metrical regularity but in the fact that it is an imitation, a representation of actions. In other words, the poem cannot be defined as a mode of language. A poem is a story, and its value or deficiency consists in the conception of this story. This principle founds the generality of *poetics* as a norm for the arts generally. If poetry and painting can be compared with one another, it is not because we could consider painting as a kind of language and assimilate the painter's colors to the poet's words. It is rather because both of them tell a story, which can be analyzed in terms of the fundamental common norms of *inventio* and *dispotitio*. The primacy of the "arrangement of actions" that defines the fable also provides the foundation for the casual way critics and translators treat the linguistic form of the work, notably in the license translators take in transposing verse into prose, or resetting it in verse forms more common to their own nation and age. La Harpe objected when La Motte transposed the first act of *Mithridate* into prose in order to demonstrate that metrics was merely an obstacle to the communication of ideas and sentiments. But one of the exercises most commonly assigned to students in order to form their style—and this would remain true well into the nineteenth century—was to transpose verse fables into prose. What constitutes a poem is in the first place the consistency of an idea set into fiction.

There is a second aspect to the principle of fiction, which is that it presupposes a specific space-time in which the fiction is offered and appreciated as such. This seems obvious: Aristotle does not need to spell it out, and it still goes without saying in the age of belles lettres. But by then the fragility of this distribution had been demonstrated by a fictional hero: Don Quixote who, in breaking Master Peter's puppets, refused to recognize the specific space-time in which one acts as if one believes in stories one does not believe. Don Quixote is not simply the hero of defunct chivalry and imagination gone mad; he is also the hero of the novelistic form itself, the hero of a mode of fiction that places its own status in peril. It is true that such confrontations between novelistic heroes and puppeteers belong to a world about which the order of belles lettres has nothing to say. But it is not for nothing that the new literature will adopt Don Quixote as its hero.

Next comes the generic principle. It is not enough for a fiction to announce itself as such—it must also conform to a genre. What defines a genre, however, is not a set of formal rules but the nature of what is represented, the object of the fiction. Once again it was Aristotle who set forth the principle in the first books of the *Poetics*: The genre of a poem—epic or satire, tragedy or comedy—is above all linked to the nature of what it represents. There are fundamentally two sorts of people (and two sorts of actions) that can be imitated: the great and the small. Likewise there are two sorts of people who imitate—noble spirits and common spirits—and two ways of imitating—one that elevates the object imitated and another that lowers it. Imitators with nobility of soul choose to represent the striking actions of the great, the heroes and the gods, and to represent them with the highest degree of formal perfection that they can attain: these imitators become epic or tragic poets. Imitators of lesser virtue choose to tell little stories about lowly people or reprove the vices of mediocre beings, and they become comic or satiric poets.

A fiction belongs to a genre. A genre is defined by the subject represented. The subject takes its place in a scale of values that defines the hierarchy of genres. The subject represented ties the genre to one of two fundamental modalities of discourse, praise and blame. There is no generic system without a hierarchy of genres. Determined by the subject represented, the genre defines the specific mode of its representation. The generic principle thus implies a third principle, which we will call the principle of decorum [*convenance*]. The poet who has chosen to represent gods rather than bourgeois, kings rather than shepherds, and has chosen a corresponding genre of fiction, must give his characters actions and discourses appropriate to their nature—and thus also appropriate to the poem's genre. The principle of decorum is thus in complete harmony with the principle of submission of *elocutio* to the invented fiction. "The tone, or key of the discourse is determined by the particular state and situation the person is in at the time he is speaking."[4] It was upon this principle, much more than on the too-famous "three unities" or *catharsis*, that the French classical age constructed its poetics and founded its criteria. The problem is not one of obeying rules but of discerning modes of suitability. The goal of fiction is to please. On this point, Voltaire agrees with Corneille, who agrees with Aristotle. But because it must please well-bred people [*honnêtes gens*], fiction must respect what makes fiction respectable as well as pleasing the principle of decorum. Voltaire's *Commentaires sur Corneille* meticulously applies this principle to all characters and situations, to all their actions and discourses. What is wrong is always unsuitable. The subject of *Théodore*, for example, is vicious because there is "nothing tragic in this plot: a young man refuses the bride offered to him because he loves

another, who in turn does not want him—this is in fact a purely trivial subject for comedy." The generals and princesses of *Suréna* "talk about love as if they were Parisian burghers." In *Pulchérie*, the verses in which Martian swears his love "seem to come from an old shepherd rather than an old warrior." Pulchérie herself speaks "like a serving-girl in a comedy" or even like a writer. "What princess would ever begin by saying that love languishes amongst signs of favor and expires amidst pleasure?" Moreover, "it is not fitting for a princess to say she is in love."[5] Indeed, a princess is not a shepherdess. But we should not mistake the nature of this unseemliness. Voltaire knows high society well enough to know that a princess, whether in love or not, speaks in pretty much the same way as a bourgeoise, if not a shepherdess. What he means is that a princess in a tragedy should not declare her love in that way, that is, should not speak like a shepherdess in an eclogue, unless you want to turn tragedy into comedy. Even Batteux, when he recommends having gods speak "in the manner they really and naturally do," is perfectly aware that our knowledge in this matter is fairly limited. The problem is to have them speak "not only as they commonly speak, but as they should speak, supposing each in his highest degree of perfection."[6] It is not a matter of local color or faithful reproduction but of fictional verisimilitude. Verisimilitude involves the overlap of four criteria of decorum: first of all, conformity to the nature of human passions in general; next, conformity to the character or manners of a particular people or historical figure, as we know them through the best authors; third, agreement with the decency and taste that are appropriate to our own manners; and finally, conformity of actions and speech with the logic of actions and characters proper to a particular genre. The perfection of the representative system is not that of a grammarian's rules. It is that of the genius who unites these four forms of decorum—natural, historical, moral, and conventional—and orders them in terms of the form that should dominate in a particular case. This is why, for example, it is Racine and not his doctrinaire critics who is correct when he shows us, in *Britannicus*, an emperor (Nero) hiding in order to overhear a conversation between lovers. The critics say that such an action is not fitting for an emperor and a tragedy; the situation and the character portrayed are comic. But this is because they have not read Tacitus, and therefore do not feel that this sort of situation is a faithful portrayal of Nero's court, such as we know it through Tacitus.

Indeed, decorum is something that is felt, and its proof lies in sensation of pleasure. This is why La Harpe can absolve Chimène of the accusation of acting like an "unnatural daughter" when she listens to her father's murderer speak to her of love. For even if the proof is negative, the theater verifies what is natural and what is unnatural:

> I must once again ask the Academy's forgiveness, but I consider it to be conclusively proven that an unnatural daughter would not be accepted in the theater, much less produce the effect that Chimène produces. Mistakes like that are never forgiven since they are judged by the heart, and the people assembled cannot accept an impression that is contrary to nature.[7]

The Rousseauist accent of La Harpe's formulation here allows us to date the argument to the period of his revolutionary enthusiasm. But the only change this makes is to grant to the republican people a privilege of verification that La Harpe's master, Voltaire, reserved for informed connoisseurs. The principle of decorum defines a relation between the author and his subject whose success can only by judged by the spectator—a certain kind of spectator. Suitability is felt. The *littérateurs* of the Academy or the periodical press do not feel it—Corneille and Racine do. They feel it not on account of their knowledge of the rules of art, but on account of their kinship with their characters, or more precisely with what their characters ought to be. This kinship consists in the fact that, unlike the *littérateurs*, both the great authors and their characters are men of glory, men of beautiful and active speech. This further implies that their natural spectators are not men who watch but men who act and who act through speech. According to Voltaire, Corneille's primary spectators were Condé and Retz, Molé and Lamoignon; they were generals, preachers, and magistrates who came for instruction in speaking worthily and not today's audience of spectators composed merely of "a certain number of young men and young women."[8]

The principle of decorum thus rests upon a harmony between three persons: the author, the represented character, and the spectator present in the theater. The natural audience of the playwright, as that of the orator, is those who "come for instruction in speaking," since speaking is their true business, whether it to command or convince, to exhort or deliberate, to teach or to please. In this sense, La Harpe's "people assembled" is every bit as much opposed to the simple gathering of "a certain number of young men and young women" as are Voltaire's generals, magistrates, princes, and bishops. It is as agents of speech that they are qualified to make the pleasure they feel into a proof of the suitability of Chimène's behavior and Corneille's play. The edifice of representation is "a kind of republic, in which everyone ought to hold the rank proportioned to his condition."[9] It is thus a hierarchical edifice in which language must be subordinated to the fiction, the genre to the subject, and the style to the characters and situations represented. In this republic, the invention of the subject commands the disposition of parts and the suitability of expressions, in imitation of the order of the parts of the soul or the Platonic city.

But this hierarchy can only impose its law within the egalitarian relation between author, character, and spectator. This relationship itself depends upon a fourth and final principle that I will call the principle of presence [*actualité*] and that can be defined as follows: what gives the edifice of representation its norm is the primacy of the speech-act, of the performance of speech. The ideal scene described (or rather invented) by Voltaire provides an exemplary verification of this primacy: the orators of bar and pulpit, the princes and generals who learn the art of speaking from *Le Cid* are also men of active speech whose judgment provides Corneille with a verification of the accord between his own power to represent speech in action and that attached to the status of his characters.

The system of representation depends upon the equivalence between the act of representation and the affirmation of speech as action. This fourth principle does not contradict the first, which had affirmed that what makes a poem a poem is its fiction and not a particular modality of language. The final principle identifies the fictional representation of actions with a staging of the act of speech. There is no contradiction here, but rather a sort of double economy of the system: the autonomy of the fiction, whose only concern is to represent and please, depends upon another order, another scene of speech that provides it with a norm. In this "real" scene, it is not only a matter of pleasing by means of stories and discourses, but of educating minds, saving souls, defending the innocent, giving counsel to kings, exhorting the people, haranguing soldiers, or simply excelling in the sort of conversation that distinguishes men of wit. The system of poetic fiction is placed in the dependence of an ideal of efficacious speech, which in turn refers back to an art that is more than an art, that is, a manner of living, a manner of dealing with human and divine affairs: rhetoric. The values that define the power of poetic speech are those of the scene of oratory. This is the supreme scene in imitation and in view of which poetry displays its own perfections. What Voltaire said about Richelieu's France is validated today by the historian of classical rhetoric:

> Our concept of "literature" is too exclusively tied to the printed text and leaves out everything that was encompassed by the comprehensive ideal of the orator and his eloquence: the art of the harangue, the art of conversation, not to mention the *tacita significatio* of gestural and plastic arts [. . .]; it is no accident that the decade of the 1630s saw such a flourishing of the theater at the French court: it is the mirror of an art of living in society in which the art of speaking is at the heart of a general rhetoric whose principal reflectors are the art of writing and the art of painting.[10]

But this dependence of poetry upon an art of speech that is also an art of living in society is not proper to the hierarchy of a monarchical order; its equivalent can be found in the age of revolutionary assemblies. Once again, the chameleon La Harpe provides an explanation:

> We next move from poetry to eloquence: more serious and important objects, more demanding and reflective study will replace the games of imagination and the diverse illusions of the most seductive of the arts [. . .]. In leaving one for the other, we should think of ourselves as passing from the pleasures of youth to the labors of maturity: for poetry is used for pleasure and eloquence for business [. . .]; when the minister announces the great truths of morality from his pulpit [. . .]; when the defender of innocence makes his voice heard in the courtroom; when the statesman deliberates in counsel on the fate of nations; when the citizen pleads the cause of freedom in the legislative assembly [. . .], then eloquence is not only an art but a sacred trust, consecrated by the veneration of all citizens [. . .].[11]

The essential place of the most elevated of the styles recognized by the tradition, the sublime style, is to be found in this oratorical speech. Our own age, in rereading pseudo-Longinus and reinterpreting the concept of the sublime, gladly associates his metaphors of storms, lava, and crashing waves with a modern crisis of narrative and representation. But the system of representation, genres and decorum always knew Longinus and found its supreme guarantee in the "sublime." Even more than Homer or Plato, the hero of sublime speech that Longinus's text gave to almost two millennia is Demosthenes.

The primacy of fiction, the generic nature of representation, defined and ordered according to the subject represented, the suitability of the means of representation, and the ideal of speech in action: these four principles define the "republican" order of the system of representation. This republic is a Platonic one in which the intellectual part of art (the invention of the subject) commands its material part (the suitability of words and images), and it can equally well espouse the hierarchical order of the monarchy or the egalitarian order of republican orators. Whence stems the constant complicity, in the nineteenth century, between academic old wigs and radical republicans to protect this system against innovative *littérateurs*, an alliance symbolized, in opposition to Hugo as well as in Mallarmé's perception, by the name of Ponsard, the entirely republican author of old-style tragedies. It is also their common perception that is summarized by Gustave Planche's reaction to the monstrous poem *Notre-Dame de Paris*, this prose poem dedicated to stone that can only humanize its

object at the cost of petrifying human speech. This monstrous invention emblematizes the collapse of the system in which the poem was a well-constructed fable presenting men who act and explain their action in beautiful speeches suitable to their condition, the situation of the action, and the pleasure of men of taste. Planche's argument points to the heart of the scandal: the reversal of body and soul, tied to the disequilibrium between parts of the soul, the material power of words in the place of the intellectual power of ideas. An entire poetic cosmology has been overturned. Representative poetry was composed of stories submitted to principles of concatenation, characters submitted to principles of verisimilitude, and discourses submitted to principles of decorum. The new poetry—expressive poetry—is made of sentences and images, sentence-images that have inherent value as manifestations of poeticity, that claim a relation immediately expressive of poetry, similar to the relation *Notre-Dame de Paris* poses between the image sculpted on a column, the architectural unity of the cathedral, and the unifying principle of divine and collective faith.

This change in cosmology can be expressed as a strict and term-for-term reversal of the four principles that structured the representative system. In opposition to the primacy of fiction, we find the primacy of language. In opposition to its distribution into genres, the antigeneric principle of the equality of all represented subjects. In opposition to the principle of decorum, the indifference of style with respect to the subject represented. In opposition to the ideal of speech in action, the model of writing. These four principles define the new poetics. What remains to be seen is whether the systematic reversal of four coherent principles defines a symmetrical coherence. Anticipating on our analysis, we can say that the problem is whether, and in what way, the affirmation of poetry as a mode of language and the principle of indifference are compatible with one other. The history of "literature" will be the constantly renewed testing of this problematic compatibility. What this means is that, if the idea of literature could be declared sacred by some and empty by others, it is because it is, *stricto sensu*, the name of a contradictory poetics.

Let us set out from the heart of the problem, namely the ruin of the generic principle. This affirmation, in truth, is subject to debate: One of the great ambitions of the Schlegel brothers was the reconstitution of a system of genres from its obsolescence. More than one literary theorist of today contends that we too have our genres, merely different ones from those of the classical age.[12] We no longer write tragedies, epics or pastorals, but we have novels and novellas, short stories and essays. But it is clear what makes these distinctions problematic and renders the Schlegel brothers' project vain: A genre is only a genre if it is determined by its subject. The genre under which *Notre-Dame de Paris* presents itself

is that of the novel. But the novel is a false genre, a non-generic genre that has never stopped traveling, ever since its birth in antiquity, from sacred temples and royal courts to the houses of merchants, to dives and brothels, or lending itself, in its modern form, to the adventures and loves of lords as well as the tribulations of schoolboys and courtesans, actors and bourgeois. The novel is the genre of what has no genre: not even a low genre like comedy, with which some have assimilated it. Comedy matches vulgar subjects with the sorts of situations and forms of expression appropriate to them, whereas the novel it has no principle of decorum. This also means that it is lacking in any determinate fictional nature. As we have seen, this is the foundation of Don Quixote's "madness," that is, his rupture with the requisites of a scene proper to fiction. When Flaubert affirms that "there are no noble subjects or ignoble subjects" and even "that there is no such thing as a subject—style in itself being an absolute manner of seeing things," he raises the anarchy of this nongenre to the rank of an "axiom" expressing "the standpoint of pure Art."[13] Indeed, if "Yvetot is the equal of Constantinople," and if the adulterous loves of a daughter of Norman peasants are as interesting as the loves of a Carthaginian princess and proper to the same form, it follows that no specific mode of expression is more suitable to one than to the other. Style is no longer what it was up to that point: the choice of modes of expression appropriate to the different characters in a given situation and of ornaments proper to the genre. Style now becomes the very principle of art.

But we still need to figure out what that means. A lazy orthodoxy sees it as merely the affirmation of the individual virtuosity of the writer who transforms base matter into literary gold—gold all the purer as the matter is base—and, positing his aristocracy in the place of the hierarchies of representation, ends up sublimating it in a new priesthood of art. But we cannot dispose so easily of the wall, the desert, and the sacred. The identification of "style" with the inmost power of the work is not the viewpoint of an aesthete, but the culmination of a complex process of transformation of poetic form and matter. It presupposes a plurisecular history of encounters between the poem, the stone, the people, and the Book (even if it effaces its traces). In the course of this long history the idea whose refusal determined the entire poetics of representation eventually imposed itself: the poem is a mode of language; its essence is the essence of language. But this history also brought forth the internal contradiction of the new poetic system, the contradiction with which literature is the interminable coming-to-terms.

CHAPTER 1: FROM REPRESENTATION TO EXPRESSION

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Mallarmé, or the Poet of Nothingness*, trans. Ernest Sturm (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 139.
2. Charles de Rémusat, *Passé et present* (1847), cited by Armand de Pontmartin, "De l'esprit littéraire en 1858," in *Nouvelles causeries du samedi* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1859), 4; Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, "Gustave Flaubert," *Le roman contemporain*, in *XIX^e siècle: les œuvres et les hommes* (Paris: Lemerre, 1902), vol. 18, p. 103; Léon Bloy, *Belluaires et porchers* (Paris: Stock, 1905), 96–97.
3. Gustave Planche, "Poètes et romanciers modernes de la France: M. Victor Hugo," *Revue des deux mondes* (1838), vol. 1, 757.
4. Charles Batteux, *A Course of the Belles Letters, or the Principles of Literature* (London: B. Law, 1761), vol. 1, 110.
5. Voltaire, *Commentaires sur Corneille*, in *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire* (Geneva: The Voltaire Foundation, 1975), vol. 55, 465, 976, 964, 965, 731.
6. Batteux, *Course of Belles Letters*, vol. 1, 157.
7. Jean-François de La Harpe, *Lycée ou Cours de littérature* (Paris, 1840), vol. 1, 476.
8. Voltaire, *Commentaires sur Corneille*, vol. 55, 830–831.
9. Batteux, *Course of Belles Letters*, vol. 1, 111.
10. Marc Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence: rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 30.
11. La Harpe, *Lycée*, vol. 1, 198.
12. See Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).
13. Flaubert to Louise Colet, January 16, 1852, *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1830–1857*, ed. and trans. Francis Steegmuller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 154.

CHAPTER 2: FROM THE BOOK OF STONE TO THE BOOK OF LIFE

1. C. D., "*Notre-Dame de Paris*, par M. Victor Hugo," *Revue des deux mondes* (1831), vol. 1, 188.
2. "I hope that we will eventually put nothing but the author's name on the cover of a book" (Émile Deschamps, "M. de Balzac," *Revue des deux mondes* (1831), vol. 4, 314–315).
3. Victor Hugo, *Le Rhin*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Club français du livre, 1968), vol. 4, 253.
4. Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Traité de l'origine des romans* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 28–29.
5. Giambattista Vico, *New Science: Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, trans. David Marsh (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001), 157.
6. Ibid., 96, 162.
7. Edgar Quinet, *Allemagne et Italie: philosophie et poésie* (Paris: Desforges, 1839), vol. 2, 97–98.
8. A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst*, in *Kritische Ausgabe der Vorlesungen*, ed. Ernst Behler and Frank Jolles (Paderborn: Schönigh, 1989), vol. 1, 388.
9. Ibid., vol. 1, 250.
10. Cf. Théodore Jouffroy, *Cours d'esthétique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1863), 220: "The stone does not say much because its elementary signs are not sufficiently prominent; it is a scribbled, poorly written word."
11. See Novalis [Georg Friedrich von Hardenberg], *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. David W. Wood (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 24: "It is not only man that speaks—the universe also speaks—everything speaks—infinite languages. / Theory of signatures."
12. Proust particularly emphasizes the theme of the alliterations of things with respect to the transparent carafes that children set in the Vivonne to catch fish, so that "one no longer knows whether the river is a crystal carafe or if the carafe is frozen liquid." Text drawn from notebook 4, printed in *Cahiers Marcel Proust 7* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 165; compare Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, in *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage, 1982), vol. 1, 183–184 [where *allitération perpétuelle* is rendered as "perpetually in flight"].

CHAPTER 3: THE BOOK OF LIFE AND THE EXPRESSION OF SOCIETY

1. Novalis [Georg Friedrich von Hardenberg], "Monologue," in *The Origins of Modern Critical Thought: German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism from Lessing to Hegel*, ed. David Simpson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 274.
2. Ibid.
3. Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, *Historical View of the Literature of the South of Europe*, trans. Thomas Roscoe (London: Henry Bohn, 1846 [1813]), vol. 2, 25.
4. Théodore Jouffroy, *Cours d'esthétique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1863), 199.
5. Zola was clearly conscious of this on at least one occasion, when, accusing his naturalism of having often substituted the enchanted nature of romanticism for scientific "nature," he gives his own interpretation of the "petrification" inherent in the literary project:

> Now it is certain that we rarely hold ourselves to this scientific rigor. All reaction is violent, and we shall react still against the abstract formula of the last centuries. Nature has entered into our works with so impetuous a bound that it has filled them, sometimes swamping the human element, submerging and carrying away characters in the midst of a downfall of rocks and great trees. [. . .]
>
> We dream of all kinds of folly, we write books in which the springs commence to sing, the oaks to talk with each other, the rocks to sigh and palpitate like a woman overcome with the midday heat. And there are symphonies in the leaves, roles given to the blades of grass, poems on light and on odors. If there is any excuse to be offered for such digressions it is because we have dreamed of broadening humanity, and that we have imbued even the stones in the roadways with it

(Emile Zola, *The Experimental Novel and Other Essays*, trans. Belle M. Sherman [New York: Cassell, 1893], 233–236).