

CAMUS' "GUEST": THE INADMISSIBLE COMPLICITY

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The twenty years since the initial publication of *Exile and the Kingdom* (1957) have seen North Africa progress from revolution to stability. The political unrest that, already in 1954, had inspired Camus' provocative tale, "The Guest" has calmed.¹ No longer do its allusions to an impending colonial war lend it any force; nor, on the other hand, do the now outdated political references deprive it of any strength. Having lost much of its political relevance, it survives into the nineteen-seventies on the strength of the author's success in communicating the moral dilemma of his protagonist. And, it might be added, appreciation of the style and characterization of "The Guest," perhaps more than that of the other tales of the collection, benefits from the loss of its political content. Now it is possible to see the delicate halftones that capture the indecision of its protagonist, the master of the isolated school charged with delivering an Arab to prison for trial, and possible execution. His drama can be understood through a systematic analysis of the narration which so scrupulously respects the point of view of the narrator that what he censors out of his account and how he reacts reveal as much as his observations.

Camus' tale, it is appropriate to note, has provoked enough study that one should not expect to find an original interpretation in another analysis of the narrative. The numerous articles, largely dating from the time of the Algerian War, have identified the numerous themes of the story.² In them, students of Camus acknowledge that the "ambiguity" of the tale invites — and, in fact, justifies — a multiplicity of interpretations.³ But scrutiny of the narrative technique can strip away much of the alleged ambiguity. It indicates first that the author had a specific view of his character through whom he portrays, with neither criticism nor approval,

the anxieties of one seeking to preserve his sense of innocence in a concrete political situation. In addition, it reveals a most felicitous wedding of style and subject: what had been seen as the writer's intentional ambiguity appears as the carefully controlled expression of the character's moral dilemma. The passage of time permits the story to be read without reference to the background political situation. It now can be seen to treat the problem that arises when duty conflicts with personal ideals.

Camus' third-person narrative begins by situating its protagonist atop a snow-covered plateau. Respect for the limits of the character's perception is evident from the first account of two men approaching his isolated schoolhouse, a silent tableau since distance prevents the schoolmaster Daru from hearing the sounds of the horse's hooves or hearing its labored breathing.⁴ Camus' use of the visual image throughout the story has been interpreted as an indication of his characters' isolation and of their inability to communicate.⁵ More significant, however, in the early paragraphs is the indication that the story is seen through Daru's eyes and that all events of the narrative are subject to his interpretation and censure. The story, then, is not about the arriving "guest," as the English translation of the intentionally ambiguous title, "L'hôte," suggests. Its subject is instead the host who, more than an actor in the account is, in Wayne C. Booth's words, "a third-person centre of consciousness through whom authors filter their narrative."⁶ Because the character merely registers rather than interprets or reports the events in which he is involved, he cannot properly be called a narrator. Still that is a convenient term to which Booth's concept can be assigned in the absence of a better word in order to discuss Daru.

Camus' narrator is engrossed in the events registered through his sensitivities. No critical distance intrudes between his perception and the account of the events in which he is also involved as an actor. Consequently, his viewpoint introduces no authorial criticism into the story. To evaluate Daru's experience, the reader must exercise the detachment Camus' actor-narrator does not enjoy. This is but the first burden the author imposes on his reader; the second is to assess Daru's reliability as a narrator — and this is perhaps the more difficult burden. Since Daru remains well within the framework of the action he perceives, the limits of his

perception are not evident. The reader is required to reconstruct for himself the character's motivation, adding to what Daru registers what he avoids acknowledging.

The schoolmaster's narrative continues with the account of his emotions as he awaits his visitors' arrival. He reflects on his life in the desert, a life of monastic self-denial: "In contrast with such poverty, he who lived almost like a monk in his remote schoolhouse, nonetheless satisfied with the little he had and with the rough life, and had felt like a lord with his whitewashed walls, his narrow couch, his unpainted shelves, his well, and his weekly provision of water and food" (p. 88). The use of the word *monk* characterizes the austerity of the existence that the schoolmaster has willingly accepted in the desert. Daru's meditation reveals, however, the satisfaction he derives from aiding the Kabyle farmers to survive in the face of the desert's hostility.

That Daru also feels like a lord registers that satisfaction. It involves more than his rudimentary comforts. The reader has already learned that this benevolent lord distributes food to the destitute inhabitants of what might be considered as his domain. Rather than feeling an aristocratic revulsion before the spectacle of their misery, Daru is sympathetic: "...it would be hard to forget that poverty, that army of ragged ghosts wandering in the sunlight, the plateaus burned to a cinder month after month, the earth shriveled up little by little, literally scorched, every stone bursting into dust under one's foot" (pp. 87-88). He then recalls that, after his military service, he had requested an assignment to a teaching post in the desert. And later he observes, "No one in this desert, neither he nor his guest, mattered. And yet, outside this desert neither of them, Daru knew, could have really lived" (p. 98). He associates life on the desert with its severity and misery. But, at the same time, he communicates in his detailed description of the desert his affection for his isolated domain (pp. 92, 97, 104). And since he enjoys his monastic comforts, his choice to live in the desert can scarcely be explained as mortification of the flesh. His respect for life and hatred of killing (p. 93) point to an emotional need that he can satisfy in this region where the hostility of the universe is represented by nature's severity. Only the desire to aid his fellowman can explain Daru's choice to engage in this struggle against an impersonal, natural enemy. Here, in the iso-

lation of the desert, he can realize the satisfactions of nobility and, at the same time, place himself on the "victim's side."⁷ Like Tarrou, the character of *The Plague* who sought to be a saint in a godless universe, he can throw himself with zeal into a conflict against an unquestionable non-human evil. But unlike the saint of *The Plague*, he refers to himself by the feudal title of lord. Its political associations announce that the saint of this story will confront a situation in which evil is identified with human, social antagonisms — such is the role that his position as schoolmaster and official representative of the French colonial government imposes on him. The arrival of the gendarme Balducci, then, projects Daru into a drama which requires an unavoidable compromise of his innocence.

Upon his arrival at the school, the gendarme informs Daru that his Arab prisoner has killed a man and that the schoolmaster will have to escort him to the prison twenty kilometers across the desert. Following his initial gestures of fraternity toward the Arab, Daru's sentiments undergo a rapid transformation as he becomes conscious of the responsibility imposed upon him. His resentment of man's "insane" thirst for blood attests first to an abstract moral indignation: "Daru felt a sudden wrath against the man, against all men with their rotten spite, their tireless hates, their blood lust" (p. 93). Then, preparing to depart, Balducci offers the schoolmaster a revolver and sympathetically observes that he too dislikes taking a prisoner to execution. Daru now realizes that he may have a role in a man's death; he vehemently refuses to deliver the prisoner (p. 95). And the reader can see what the character does not admit: that he becomes angry as soon as his purity and peace of mind are threatened.

At this point, the elements of the drama are fixed. The remainder of the story recounts the schoolmaster's futile efforts to avoid compromising his innocence. Obscurities are frequent as the character refuses to interpret his observations or emotions.

The representation of the gendarme's departure, watched by Daru through the classroom window until Balducci disappears beneath the edge of the plateau, reminds the reader that he is seeing the story through the eyes of its protagonist. The narrative now begins to function on a second level as an index to Daru's sensibilities. Thus, with a series of gestures which testify to his

repressed emotions, Daru leaves the unbound Arab and retreats to his room:

Daru walked back toward the prisoner, who, without stirring, never took his eyes off him. 'Wait,' the schoolmaster said in Arabic and went toward the bedroom. As he was going through the door, he had a second thought, went to the desk, took the revolver, and stuck it in his pocket. Then, without looking back, he went into his room. (pp. 96-97)

Daru avoids analyzing his feelings but he reports the gestures they elicit. Only under scrutiny do they betray a hope to escape his onerous burden. First, refusal to leave the revolver in the classroom with the Arab indicates an understandable distrust of the accused murderer. But this distrust is not without its limits: Daru does not bind his prisoner. Secondly, Daru's refusal to stay in the classroom with the Arab or to invite him into the living quarters suggests an aversion. Again this emotion stands in opposition to the solicitude shown the Arab upon his arrival. These inconsistencies can be reconciled when emotions rise to the surface, as they do in the next episode.

In the solitude of his room, Daru withdraws into the more comforting thoughts of man's struggle against the desert. Once his thoughts return to the present, he discovers with astonished pleasure that the Arab may have escaped and spared him his responsibility.

When he got up, no noise came from the classroom. He was amazed at the unmixed joy he derived from the mere thought that the Arab might have fled and that he would be alone with no decision to make. But the prisoner was there. He had merely stretched out between the stove and the desk. (p. 98)

The rapid transition from joy to disappointment, punctuated by *but* and *merely*, is not investigated. Instead, Daru busies himself with the preparation of the meal and the bed. When the chores are finished, he self-consciously registers an uneasiness that he also avoids analyzing: "There was nothing more to do or to get ready. He had to look at this man" (pp. 99-100). When projected against the Arab, this discomfort is translated into hostility.

More elements of Daru's drama come to the surface through what appears first to be his unexpected revulsion at the Arab's crime—hardly a reaction that should have astonished Daru. But this astonishment betrays a different, less noble motive which the reader must surmise by filling in the gaps of the narrative. Daru's account shows an effort to occupy himself with less perplexing thoughts but no effort to understand the Arab's feelings; his conversation reveals a refusal to become involved in the drama of his unwanted guest. The Arab briefly explains how he killed, then asks, "Now what will they do to me?" (p. 100). Unresponsive to the questions and gestures that betray the Arab's fear, Daru reports only his own emotions to the reader—an unexplained hostility and an undefined uneasiness in the presence of the Arab. The Arab's efforts to continue the conversation convey his hope for the protection of the Europeans. He concludes with a request that Daru accompany him and, presumably, the gendarme to the prison at Tinguit. The narrator provides no explanation for this question, answering it only with an evasive "why?" which he repeats with an authoritarian emphasis. The Arab's response is the supplication, "Come with us" (p. 101).⁸

What Daru interprets as the Arab's incomprehension paradoxically registers his own. Through this misunderstanding, Camus points to a lacuna in the narrative, prodding the reader to interpret anxieties that the schoolmaster refuses to acknowledge. The reader needs no special familiarity with the brutality of Arab tribal law to see that the prisoner's fear is not of European justice. He expects his European host, native to the region, to understand his fear of punishment at the hands of those who would avenge his victim. Daru, however, shows himself to be insensitive to his prisoner's fears: if he is to retain his sense of innocence, he cannot admit that capture will lead to the cruel death the Arab anticipates. To avoid this admission, he must disregard the anxiety that distorts his ward's face and gestures. Consequently, Daru's account cannot be expected to confirm this interpretation; but the next episode reveals the same intentions—still unacknowledged by Daru—to erect a barrier between himself and his prisoner.

As he lies in bed, Daru imagines the Arab as an adversary challenging his serenity. But of more significance is the psychological mechanism that permits him to avoid facing his own mo-

tives. He blames himself, not for any dereliction, but for his silly thoughts:

In this room where he had been sleeping alone for a year, this presence bothered him. But it bothered him also by imposing on him a sort of brotherhood he knew well but refused to accept in the present circumstances. Men who share the same rooms, soldiers or prisoners, develop a strange alliance as if, having cast off their armor with their clothing, they fraternized every evening, over and above their differences, in the ancient community of dream and fatigue. But Daru shook himself; he didn't like such musings, and it was essential to sleep. (p. 102).

As the night passes, he lies awake listening for his prisoner's movements. When the Arab finally stirs, his first thoughts are for his own safety. Then, as the Arab opens the door to leave, Daru notes his relief that his ward has finally left, "Good riddance!" (p. 103). Remembering perhaps his earlier disappointment, when the Arab did not take advantage of an opportunity to escape, he listens now for confirmation only to hear that the Arab has stepped out to urinate. He resigns himself to his responsibility and to sleep without admitting his frustration nor trying to explain why the prisoner refused an opportunity to escape. Shortly afterward, his account will provide an explanation: "Still later he seemed, from the depth of his sleep, to hear furtive steps around the schoolhouse" (pp. 103-104). Mindless of his prisoner's peril and without making any effort to verify his conjecture, the negligent warden dismisses the footsteps as a dream and goes on sleeping (p. 104).

When he awakens his ward for breakfast the next morning, the Arab's anxiety is translated by a startled recoil. Following a silent meal, Daru finds more pleasant thoughts to occupy his mind until the Arab's cough reminds him of his charge. With the approach of the moment of decision, Daru's resentment grows. His anger erodes the patina of moral indignation that concealed his selfish hope of remaining innocent of anyone's death. Childishly, then, he condemns those who have imposed this burden on him, those whom he sees as directly responsible for his discomfort. Only secondarily does he condemn the Arab—not for his crime, but only for being so clumsy as to be caught and thereby creating this responsibility. The crime is now seen from the perspective of an

unwilling actor almost desperately trying to avoid compromising the ideals that initially brought him to the aid of the desert nomads:

At that moment, from the other side of the schoolhouse, the prisoner coughed. Daru listened to him almost despite himself and then, furious, threw a pebble that whistled through the air before sinking into the snow. That man's stupid crime revolted him, but to hand him over was contrary to honor. Merely thinking of it made him smart with humiliation. And he cursed at one and the same time his own people who had sent him this Arab and the Arab too who had dared to kill and not managed to get away. (p. 105)

Camus already made known his opposition to the death penalty in his "Reflections on the Guillotine."⁹ In their own way, Daru and other characters before him show a comparable repugnance, but clarified by this angry outburst, the schoolmaster's concern for his fellowman appears secondary to more selfish concerns. Bringing his prisoner to prison and possible execution would be contrary to his ideal of purity; his self-respect requires that he remain innocent of any bloodletting. A temporary escape from responsibility is to inveigh against those who have posed this threat to his innocence. Besides this interesting face-saving device, the outburst reveals, paradoxically, how moral considerations lose their force when self-esteem is threatened.

How the schoolmaster avoids dealing with his responsibility becomes evident in the subsequent episodes, which beg the same scrutiny. When, for instance he pauses momentarily at his desk before starting out across the desert toward the prison, the reader must recall that, before preparing the evening meal, Daru had put the revolver there. Now his hesitation subtly marks his decision not to carry the gun: he will make the trip with no means of preventing an escape or of protecting his prisoner. And the next incident, reported with comparable subtlety, confirms this interpretation:

But, a short distance from the schoolhouse, he thought he heard a slight sound behind them. He retraced his steps and examined the surroundings of the house; there was no one there. The Arab watched him without seeming to understand. (p. 106)

Again Daru does not indicate what the Arab should understand, but details surrounding the incident point to its meaning. During the night Daru dismissed the sound of footsteps as a dream; hearing them again, he investigates them. The apparent inconsistency can be explained. By leaving his prisoner alone on the path, he affords him an opportunity to escape — but also exposes him to the vengeance of those lurking nearby. Here, one should note that possible killing does not offend Daru so long as he need not acknowledge his responsibility for it. And he reports only that the Arab watches him: he has an understandable interest in the search. Alert to the danger threatening him, he understands what Daru does not admit; his look of incomprehension suggests his wonder that Daru does not understand the fear that prevents his escape.

The two-hour hike that follows this incident brings the two men to a rocky eminence overlooking the desert. Daru points out to the seemingly uncomprehending Arab the paths to imprisonment or apparent freedom among the nomads. He cannot now avoid reading fear on the face of his prisoner but refuses to hear his supplications as he abandons him to the desert:

The Arab had now turned toward Daru and a sort of panic was visible in his expression. 'Listen,' he said. Daru shook his head: 'No, be quiet. Now I'm leaving you.' He turned his back on him, took two long steps in the direction of the school, looked hesitantly at the motionless Arab, and started off again. For a few minutes he heard nothing but his own step resounding on the cold ground and did not turn his head. A moment later, however, he turned around. The Arab was still there on the edge of the hill, his arms hanging now, and he was looking at the schoolmaster. Daru felt something rise in his throat. But he swore with impatience, waved vaguely, and started off again. (p. 108)

In order to make this final, impatient gesture, Daru must dominate the feeling of guilt evoked by the sight of the frightened Arab. He abandons his charge, but then appears to be tormented by an obscure fraternal instinct. He scrambles back up the hill under the oppressive sun to catch his last view of the Arab on the path to Tinguit: "And in that slight haze, Daru, with heavy heart, made out the Arab walking slowly on the road to prison" (p. 109). He had hoped to see his unwanted guest on the trail to the freedom of the nomad camp, exposing himself to the vengeance of his victim's

people during the daylong trek; instead Daru finds that he has chosen the relative safety of prison and possible execution. Daru's uneasiness may translate pity or remorse for having abetted what he must now see as the Arab's suicidal decision. Certainly he finds no relief in having abandoned his charge.

At this point, an explanation may be in order for the detail of this investigation of the schoolmaster's motives. It serves to underscore the elements of a censored narrative which defines the limits of the narrator's consciousness. Relying on a concept explained by T. S. Eliot in his famous essay on Hamlet, we can see certain resemblances between Camus' and Shakespeare's characters.¹⁰ Daru and Hamlet retreat before their responsibilities, as the authors refuse to identify their characters' uneasiness with an "objective correlative." While, as Eliot suggests, Shakespeare may have been unable to handle his material, quite the opposite is true in Camus' case. As Henry James once pointed out, the writer of prose fiction has narrative devices at his disposal that the dramatist lacks. And Camus puts them to effective use. He has exercised a most delicate control over his narrative in order to provide just enough evidence for the patient reader to be able to discern the values and the aversions of the protagonist. The hole in his narrative, the absence of any objective correlative, betrays his character's retreat from an obligation that would, by the very nature of the moral choices open to him, compromise his innocence. The drama and the technique of the narrative are fused: the drama cannot be fully understood if the narrative is read only for what it says. It must be appreciated for its style which derives from the censorship exercised by the mind of the narrator. More than a simple log of events, it is also a characterization of the character who seeks, above all, to preserve his own innocence. In addition, it contains the mechanics of his self-justification.

Refusal to acknowledge the Arab's fear should leave Daru ignorant of the dangers to which he exposes his ward. This ignorance would then excuse his abandoning the Arab. By accepting no role in the Arab's punishment, he keeps his moral ideals intact — such, at least, are the subconscious, unacknowledged motives that underlie the actions he reports. But because the account is identified with the actor-narrator's point of view, it lacks the

distance that permits criticism of the character. The conclusion, however, proclaims Daru's tragedy, for it is there that Camus introduces the irony that carries his criticism of the protagonist. The author does not violate his character's point of view; rather he depicts the narrator's reaction to an accusation which, although unjust, makes Daru realize that, in abandoning the Arab and his own responsibility, he condemns him as surely as if he had accepted his responsibility. This conclusion conveys the message that there is no retreat from moral commitment.

Returning to his school, Daru reads the threat scrawled on the blackboard, "You handed over our brother, you will pay for this" (p. 109). The message first confirms the existence of Arab prowlers about the school; but more important, it indicts Daru for the complicity he sought to avoid. Not even the desert offers a sanctuary from moral obligations that threaten his innocence. Shortly after completing the story, Camus was to express the same idea in accepting his Nobel Prize. Referring to the technology of modern warfare, he spoke of his generation as being involved in a struggle from which no one could feel exempt.¹¹

To underscore his own message, Camus projects his protagonist's reaction to the ominous message against the background of the once comforting desert. Daru's response is seen in the sentiments expressed in the concluding sentence as he looks out over the desert: "Daru looked at the sky, the plateau, and, beyond, the invisible hands stretching all the way to the sea. In this vast landscape he had loved so much, he was alone" (p. 109). The sense of satisfaction that this would-be lord had experienced in aiding his subjects has disappeared. He feels lonely, an exile from that domain where he once enjoyed a monastic serenity.¹²

Camus' reputation as a politically committed writer and his publicized refusal to take sides for or against Algerian independence undoubtedly led many to exaggerate the political aspects of this story when it first appeared. Now that the political issues no longer obscure its formal qualities, "The Guest" can take its place alongside *The Stranger* as one of Camus' masterpieces. But one should not suppose that the tale deserves recognition solely for its style. It marks, along with *The Fall* and the other tales of *Exile and the Kingdom*, a substantial refinement of the naïve view of social and political evil presented in *The Plague*.

In that 1947 novel, the human enemy had been entirely eliminated from the allegory of the Nazi occupation of France. The plague victims of Oran appear as victims of a metaphysical absurd. Neither Tarrou nor Dr. Rieux view their adversaries as a group of men. Without fear of contributing to the evil of the world, they translate their moral ideals easily into actions. When challenged by Roland Barthes to show how characters of *The Plague* would respond before a human representation of the scourge, Camus replied that the partisans of the Resistance had already given the answer.¹³ Camus may have been aware that he was parrying the challenge rather than answering it: his response dates from the time he was composing *Exile and the Kingdom*. In "The Guest" especially, he has transported the heir to Tarrou's "saintly" innocence from the realm of allegory to the world of conflicting human interests. He projects him into a drama which allows of no pure, uncompromising solution.

Where *The Plague* pointed to satisfactory, individualistic solutions to ethical problems, even in the face of overwhelming political or social opposition, "The Guest" allows no such optimism. It registers, rather, the limits of a traditional individualism in providing moral direction in a complex world. Together with Camus' other fictions of the same period, this tale signals rejection of his benign existentialism in favor of a new view of man. Presumably this new view was to have inspired the novel that he was working on at the time of his death in 1960. Work on "The First Man" had progressed so little, however, that any speculation on its content would be idle indeed. Thus the message of "The Guest" must stand as a significant part of Camus' legacy. And the full import of this message — negative though it may be — can be best appreciated when the political context of the story is understood as a paradigm of the opposition between individualistic, self-centered idealism and the imperatives of authentic social action.

NOTES

¹ Roger Quillot gives the genesis of the story in his annotations, see Albert Camus, *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles*, ed. Roger Quillot (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1962), pp. 2040-2041.

² For a comprehensive summary of the studies see Peter Cryle, "L'Hôte" in his *Bilan critique: L'Exil et le royaume d'Albert Camus* (Paris:

Minard, *Les Lettres Modernes*, 1973), pp. 119-148. See also a series of articles in *Studies in Short Fiction*: Laurence Perrine, "Camus' 'The Guest': A Subtle and Difficult Story," I (Fall 1963), 52-58; John Simon, "Camus' Kingdom: The Native Host and an Unwanted Guest," I (Summer 1964), 289-91; and English Showalter, "Camus' Mysterious Guests: A Note on the Value of Ambiguity," IV (Fall 1967), 348-50.

³ This is the conclusion of Owen J. Miller in his article, "Diversité et symbole dans *L'Exil et le royaume*" in *Camus nouvelliste: L'Exil et le royaume*, ed. Brian Fitch (Paris: Minard, Lettres Modernes, 1973), pp. 39-40.

⁴ "The Guest," *Exile and the Kingdom*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1957), p. 85. Further references to "The Guest" are identified by page number in parentheses in the body of the text.

⁵ See Edwin Grobe, "The Psychological Structure of Camus' 'L'Hôte'" *French Review*, XL (Dec. 1966), 357-367.

⁶ Wayne C. Booth "Distance and Point of View: An Essay in Classification," *The Theory of the Novel*, ed. Philip Stevick (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 94.

⁷ The words are those of Jean Tarrow in Camus' *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Knopf, 1971), p. 231.

⁸ Some studies have suggested that the Arab may with his request be inviting Daru to join the Algerians in their struggle for independence. English Showalter, op. cit., p. 349, refutes this suggestion.

⁹ "Reflexions sur la guillotine" in Albert Camus, *Essais*, ed. Roger Quilliot (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1965), pp. 1019-1064; but also in *The Plague*, pp. 228-229.

¹⁰ T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1948), pp. 95-103. Eliot's analysis seems most useful for understanding "The Guest"; the explanations of the "dramatic" associations with the point of view had been earlier explained by Henry James; see especially "Preface to *The Ambassadors*" in *The Art of the Novel*, ed. Richard P. Blackmur (New York: Scribners, 1937), pp. 307-326; also Jean-Paul Sartre in *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* (Paris: Hermann, 1965) explains the psychological mechanism of distorted perceptions such as Daru's.

¹¹ "L'artiste et son temps," published as the "Conférence du 14 décembre 1957," in *Essais*, pp. 1079-1080.

¹² This evolving view of the desert has been explained by Paul Fortier, "Le Décor symbolique de 'L'Hôte' d'Albert Camus," *French Review*, XLVI, no. 3 (Feb. 1973), 535-542.

¹³ Published as an open letter to Roland Barthes in the February 1955 bulletin of the Club du Meilleur Livre and reprinted in *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles*, pp. 1965-1967.