

GUSTAVE GUICHES, HIS LIFE AND WORKS

by

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## PREFACE

In recent years the name of Gustave Guiches has begun to appear more frequently in the pages of works dedicated to the great writers of the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. It seems, therefore, appropriate that the work of this gifted and versatile writer who enjoyed considerable success and esteem in his life-time, should be made better known.

In undertaking this task I have been greatly helped by those who were close to Guiches. In particular my enduring gratitude is due to General Pierre Keller, the lifelong friend of Gustave Guiches, whom I met in Camy, in the Lot, in August 1972, and in August 1975, and without whose help I might never have met Mlle. Marguerite Guiches, M. et Mme. Jean Pagès and Mme. Henri Bourboulon, whose help and co-operation were so vital.

Through the kindness of Mademoiselle Guiches (who died early in 1976, at the age of 93) I was able to examine a number of manuscripts and documents which had lain undisturbed since Madame Guiches' death in 1960. This was made possible for me through the kind intervention and enthusiastic support of M. Jean Pagès, the nephew of Gustave Guiches, who gave generously of his time and energy in spite of his having, as he put it, reached the age of twenty for the fourth time. My thanks are also due in abundance to Mme. Pagès who patiently and generously endured my disturbing influence at Easter 1973. My debt to Mme. Henri Bourboulon, niece of Gustave Guiches, is also incalculable, since she introduced me to M. Jean Pagès in the beginning, and later,

after the death of Mlle. Guiches, gave me free access to the books and papers her father had left behind. Without the unstinting support and encouragement of these kind people my task would have been difficult indeed.

Not least I owe the completion of this thesis to my wife who throughout has shown the most incredible forbearance, given much needed encouragement, and devoted much time and energy to reading and typing my scripts.

My thanks are due also to the help and guidance of my first tutor, Mr. John Christie, who introduced me to the subject of Gustave Guiches and to whom I owe the immense pleasure and interest that my researches have brought me. Finally, I am grateful also to Dr. Russell King whose support and expertise have guided me through the final stages.

E.L.

**PART I**  
**HIS LIFE**

## CHAPTER I

His Early Life 1860-81

Alexis Antoine Paul Gustave Guiches was the only son of Joseph Guiches, tax inspector in the commune of Albas in Quercy. He was born on the 18 June, 1860, the youngest of three children. Of his two sisters, Marthe, and Marie, the younger one, Marie was to die three years later at the age of eleven.

The comparative comfort of his parental background and the settled life of family and friends are undoubtedly a key to the even temperament which was to be both a help and a hindrance to him in his career as a writer. His father, apart from his official appointment, owned vineyards which brought him a steady revenue and was a respected member of the community. He was for a number of years mayor of Albas. Joseph Guiches wanted his son to become a lawyer and sent him to study law in Paris. Nevertheless, young Gustave always felt that his father had too little faith in him and when, having failed his law exams, he declared his intention of becoming a writer, his father strongly disapproved. Joseph Guiches was a practical man. To him, a career in letters was frivolous and unsound. Law, on the other hand, was honourable and lucrative.

If he inherited from his father qualities of steady respectability and traditional morality, he acquired from his mother more sense of adventure and ambition. Joseph originated from Creysse in the valley of the Dordogne in Haut-Quercy. The girl he married was the great-granddaughter of Jean-Baptiste Pagès de Labouyssette, born in the commune of Albas in 1721 and guillotined on 27 August, 1794 at Bordeaux at the age of 73,

for having defended his friend the Comte de Fumel before the Bordeaux Revolutionary Tribunal. Fumel was guillotined after him and Labouysette's property was confiscated. He left twenty children, eighteen of them girls.

One of these daughters married Alexis Salinié of Albas. Their daughter Aglaé married Jean-Jacques-Pierre Alexis de Bercegol, who was born in the Château de Floiras, near Albas, and fought in Napoléon's army during its retreat from Moscow. He left the army while still young, a captain and holder of the cross of 'chevalier' of the Legion of Honour. It was Bercegol's daughter, Marie-Thérèse Zélie whom Joseph Guiches married. He was fifteen years older than his wife, a fact that caused Gustave to remark many years later that he was more like his grandfather than his father. Joseph Guiches died in 1894 and his wife in 1899.

On Joseph's side also there was evidence of at least one spirited member of the family. Baptiste Guiches,<sup>1</sup> Joseph's brother, had embarked on a career in the world of letters before Gustave was born, a fact which left Joseph totally unimpressed, since Baptiste was a clear example of a writer who found it very difficult to make a living.

When Gustave was twelve years old he went to the school of Les Petits Carmes at Cahors. He was a good, hardworking and obedient pupil whose marks in Latin in particular were excellent. But he already felt the urge to write, and his diary, which he wrote at the age of thirteen, already betrays not only a determination to write but also a gift for observation, and a maturity of outlook. On his life at school he wrote:

Ce jour-là, je me levais la tristesse au coeur.  
J'allais être pensionnaire pendant quelques jours.  
De suite après mon déjeuner, j'allais chercher une  
consolation auprès d'un de mes camarades auquel je  
communiquais toutes mes peines. J'étais depuis

quelques instants avec lui, lorsque, tout à coup, du fond du corridor obscur, je vis apparaître la figure illuminée et pétillante du linge. Il me fit signe de venir à lui: "Guiches, me dit le petit homme d'un ton sec et légèrement troublé, faites vos paquets. Vous partez aujourd'hui...." <sup>2</sup>

And on the occasion of the marriage of his sister in 1873 he wrote in his diary:

On alla prendre le café au kiosque au milieu des lanternes vénitiennes et des feux de bengale, que nous allumions dans chaque bouquet d'arbre. Du haut de la terrasse d'Alphonse, nous lançâmes une fusée volante qui alla retomber au pied des dames. On revint au salon où l'on dansa beaucoup. Les jeunes gens d'Albas allumèrent deux chandelles romaines. Nous partîmes de suite après pour la mairie. Là, arrivés au milieu de la place publique, M.D. tomba dans un aqueduc qui n'avait pas été bouché et entraîna dans sa chute la dame qu'il conduisait. Cela ne fit qu'exciter nos rires, car il n'y avait pas de mal. Il eût été vraiment fâcheux qu'une noce qui promettait d'être si belle commençât par un accident. <sup>3</sup>

Guiches obtained his baccalauréat without any setbacks and then went to Paris to study law which was his father's wish, working, at the same time, at the Ministère de l'Intérieur. In 1879, after a year's study, he failed his examination and returned to Albas. Guiches did not enjoy his studies. He wrote to Francis Maratuech in 1879: "Dans ce moment je prépare mon premier examen de Droit: cette occupation jointe au travail du ministère refroidit un peu mes joyeux souvenirs de l'hiver." <sup>4</sup> Another year's study, this time at the Faculté of Toulouse, also led to failure in 1880. Gustave was not really interested in becoming a lawyer, a magistrate, or a doctor but he was a dutiful son. Now that he had failed to qualify for the role his father had chosen for him, his desire to go to Paris and be a writer became stronger. He told his father: "Je veux faire de la littérature". But his father was against this, considering that

literature was not a promising career and that Gustave had not the "volonté" to make a success of it. Gustave had always been much more docile than his sister, as he tells us in Au Banquet de la Vie (1925):

Je connais mes défauts. Je suis lent au travail, fougueux au plaisir, orgueilleux, timide, mais je me sens capable de me passionner pour une idée et d'en poursuivre, d'un effort indécourageable, la réalisation. Je l'ai cette idée. Il y a aussi plus de deux ans qu'elle et moi nous chamaillons. (p.2)<sup>5</sup>

So he protested to his father that he who had a love for the scriptures and other great writers should oppose his own son's ambitions to write: "Pourquoi l'écrivain qui veut vivre de sa plume est-il selon vous un fou, quand l'avocat prétendant à vivre de sa parole est tenu pour un sage? Pourquoi un métier de crève-la-faim, quand la librairie est un commerce classé florissant?" (p.4) Nonetheless Gustave's father would only allow him to go to Paris if he had a job to ensure at least half his livelihood, as, for every writer who was a success, there were many "pauvres diables" who were not.

And so, without telling his family, Guiches wrote to his brother-in-law, Alphonse Pagès, who was 'chef du contentieux' at the Compagnie Parisienne du Gaz, to ask him to find him a job.

Meantime he had been writing poetry and prose. His poetry was typical of many a writer of his years, unoriginal but agreeable:

Nous avons tous les deux passé notre soirée  
Loin des jeux, à l'écart et la main dans la main.  
Tu n'avais que seize ans, moi j'étais collégien,  
Je sentais ma jeune âme à tes regards brûlée...<sup>6</sup>

By May 1882 Guiches had a trilogy of some seventy poems ready for publication. He called it Mes Bêtes, Choses, et Gens and wrote to Maratuech to ask him how much it would cost to publish the collection in a Mazeyrie edition.<sup>7</sup> Despite "une lettre charmante" from Mazeyrie, Guiches did not pursue the idea of private publication, presumably on account of the cost. By September of the same year he wrote to Maratuech that he was putting the finishing touches to a collection of two hundred poems "d'essence neurotique", indicating the strong influence of Rollinat. Rollinat had dedicated several poems to Guiches in his Névroses (1883).<sup>8</sup> However, in June 1883 Guiches wrote to say that he was delaying publication of his poems to eliminate the influence of Rollinat first and that he was having difficulty in replacing some of them.<sup>9</sup>

While studying law in Paris in 1879, at the age of nineteen, Guiches wrote some articles for Le Limousin, in which he commented on events taking place in Paris. As he was working for the Ministère de l'Intérieur and his articles were sometimes controversial he wrote under different pen-names. One article was signed 'Aristophane' and several others 'Jean du Quartier'.<sup>10</sup> Later he also contributed to minor revues such as the Feu Follet, founded by his friend Francis Maratuech in 1880. Guiches wrote from Cahors to Maratuech in May 1880 offering him advice which betrays a high degree of youthful confidence and enthusiasm: "La prose même ne se fait lire qu'à la condition d'être soutenue par une action intéressante et moderne. Vous devez savoir aussi



bien que moi qu'on ne lit plus les descriptions et que les rêveries ont le doux privilège d'exciter l'hilarité des lecteurs."<sup>11</sup> He also recommended that the revue should contain little poetry if it was to be successful. In fact the revue was not a great success and had but a short life, from 1880 to 1889 and again from 1899 to 1902.

Guiches never felt very close to his father. He was an obedient son and there was no open rift but he tells us quite clearly in Au Banquet de la Vie of the gap between them. There was an age difference of fifty-two years, so that when Gustave left to start his life in Paris at the age of twenty-one his father was already seventy-three.<sup>x</sup> The age difference was all the more marked because Gustave's mother was fifteen years younger than her husband. She therefore seemed young to Gustave in comparison with his father. He also felt strongly that his father lacked confidence in him. When his father accompanied him to the station for his journey to start his job with the Compagnie du Gaz and his career as a writer, Guiches tells us:

Outre le désir qu'il a de rester avec moi le plus longtemps possible, il ne me croit pas capable d'accomplir, seul, les formalités du guichet et de l'enregistrement.

Je le regarde. Jamais la distance que l'âge a établie entre nous ne m'a paru si infranchissable. J'ai vingt et un ans. Il en a soixante-douze, sous ses cheveux blancs qui bouclent sur la nuque, son visage rasé offrant au regard ses beaux traits d'intelligence et de droiture m'apparaît comme un visage d'aïeul. Il est plus que mon père, et je m'explique pourquoi mon affection vénère en lui, un grand-père, comme la sienne, en son enfant, chérit un petit-fils, pourquoi il me juge selon son époque et pourquoi je le confronte, moi, avec mon temps. (p.11)

Like all young generations he felt his father was unsympathetic and unwilling to recognise his independence. This remoteness continued to affect their relations and troubled Guiches even after many years in Paris. His account to Huysmans of the differences between him and his father led Huysmans to believe that Guiches had no affection for him and when Huysmans failed to send his condolences on his father's death in 1894 Guiches was deeply offended. Huysmans explained: "J'ai cru que le désaccord dont vous m'aviez parlé, entre votre famille et vous, avaient aboli toute affection, de votre part...."<sup>12</sup> And Guiches felt, when kneeling beside his dead father, that he had not behaved as he should have towards his father and had misunderstood "la tendre bonté de son badinage et le zèle si affectueux de ses conseils."

The need for his parents' approval was keenly felt by him and on the publication of his first novel Céleste Prudhomat (1886) he wrote: "Je veux que mon premier livre soit chargé d'apporter aux miens, là-bas, une ardente part du sentiment qui, en cet instant même, m'agite, et c'est, me semble-t-il, le diplôme de mon véritable baccalauréat-ès-lettres, qu'avec un bonheur réfléchi, réparateur et profond, je leur envoie." (Au Banquet de la Vie , p.183)

Guiches' mother occupied less of his concern. When he left for Paris: "elle dissimule son émotion sous des paroles grondeuses." She told him to travel second class and not to wait for a month before writing. In fact he did write to his mother rather than to his father and kept her informed of his progress and his plans.

And so Guiches, having written to his brother-in-law in Paris in 1881, waited patiently for nearly two months before he received a reply:

C'est aujourd'hui le 23 octobre, et déjà,  
dans les courants d'air qui jouent aux  
quatre coins autour des piliers de l'église  
en bousculant des odeurs d'encens, d'ail et  
de basilic, je sens le petit frisson avant-  
coureur de la Toussaint, et j'en ai froid  
dans le dos. Encore un hiver? Oh! Non!  
Non! Pas ça! (p.5)

Then Guiches received a telegram from Alphonse Pagès informing him that he had found him a job with the Compagnie du Gaz. His joy at the news was swiftly followed by feelings of reluctance to leave the home and surroundings of which he had become so disdainful. But he fought against this: "Oh! que cette sentimentalité va me gêner et me faire souffrir! Il faut que je m'en affranchisse. Sans quoi, elle ferait de moi, au lieu du serviteur de mon cerveau qui est sain, l'esclave de mon coeur, ce fou." (p.10) Within little more than twenty-four hours of receiving the telegram Guiches was on his way.

Accompanied and organised by his father until the train departed from Luzech station, Guiches, left on his own in the train compartment, suddenly felt apprehensive and afraid. "Toute ma vie je ne serai qu'un pauvre petit employé de rien du tout qui ne connaîtra pas une miette de ce qu'il a rêvé. Un pessimisme affreux m'écrase. Je m'épouvante. Comme ma mère me connaît bien!" (p.14) To give himself greater confidence, at Libos, while waiting for the express, like the hero of La Tueuse (1921), he paid the supplement for a first-class ticket and looked forward to "la rumeur de la ville, le coudolement de la rue, les serres chaudes des bureaux de rédaction, des salons, des théâtres."<sup>13</sup>

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Il y a plus d'un âne à la Foire - Vaudeville en un acte, par MM. Paul de Kock et Guiches. Librairie Théâtrale. Paris, 1851. See also Au Banquet de la Vie, Editions Spes, Paris, 1925, Chapter 1, p.4.
2. Quoted by General Pierre Keller in Gustave Guiches et le Quercy, lecture given in Cahors on 3 November 1957, published in Le Bulletin de la Société des Etudes du Lot, 1958, p.263. See Appendix A(i) for a letter written by Guiches while he was at les Petits Carmes.
3. Extract from Guiches' diary for 1873, quoted by Henri Austruy in Gustave Guiches, sa vie, ses œuvres, ses amitiés, published in La Nouvelle Revue, Quatrième Série, Paris, 1936. See also Appendix D(v) for an extract from pages on the death of his sister, written at the age of 20 years.
4. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, La Nouvelle Revue, 4<sup>e</sup> Série, Vol. 143, Mai-Juin 1936, p.104, letter dated 3 July 1879.  
Francis Maratuech was born at Ferrières in the commune of Sérignac, Puy-Léveque in Quercy on 29 January, 1853. In 1880 he founded Le Feu Follet which ceased publication in 1889, began again in 1899 and finally ceased in 1902. Maratuech wrote a number of 'nouvelles'. His work included Rocailles, Paris, Lemerre, 1882, a collection of poems, articles and short stories, one of which, Le Cerisier, was dedicated to Guiches, Les Kadurques, 1905, Conte Celtique (La Nouvelle Revue, 15 July 1893) Un Ami (La Nouvelle Revue, 1 October 1894), Le Mal de la Terre (La Nouvelle Revue, 1 Mai 1897). More than five hundred of his 'Nouvelles' were published in Le Feu Follet. In 1900 he founded Le Quercinois in Cahors, which he directed until 1904. In 1904 he became editor of Le Roussillon. He died in May 1908.
5. Au Banquet de la Vie, Paris: Editions Spes, 1925. (All page references following quotations in the text are to this work, unless otherwise stated.)
6. Quoted by Pierre Keller, op.cit., p.264. See Appendix D(iv) for the full text of this poem, Réminiscence, as it was written down for me by the daughter of M. Jean Pagès, Madame Denise Lambert, who had learned it as a child.
7. Letter to Francis Maratuech, 30 May 1882, quoted by Henri Austruy, Vol. 143, p.282.

8. Letter to Francis Maratuech, 20 September 1882, quoted by Henri Austruy, Vol.143, p.289.
9. Letter to Francis Maratuech, 27 June 1883, Vol.144, p.39.
10. Letter to Francis Maratuech, 3 July 1879, Vol.143, p.104.
11. Letter to Francis Maratuech, quoted by Henri Austruy, p.106.
12. Le Banquet, Paris, Editions Spes, 1926, p.275.
13. Guiches based four of his novels on the theme of the hero who leaves his home in the provinces to make a new life in Paris, L'Imprévu (1890), Un Cœur Discret (1892), La Tueuse (1921), and the unpublished Pile (1935). His first impressions of Paris are reflected in L'Imprévu, Chapter III.

## CHAPTER 2

Literary Apprenticeship in Paris  
1881-85

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Guiches arrived in Paris full of enthusiasm "Ah! comme je vais aimer Paris, comme je vais m'y enthousiasmer, y lutter et y souffrir, y vaincre peut-être? En tout cas, jamais plus je ne le quitterai." (Au Banquet de la Vie, p.17)

His employment at the Compagnie du Gaz gave him little to do. It was not a good job he well knew, although he described it in a letter to Francis Marateuch as "une situation aussi honorable que rétribuée"<sup>1</sup> He made use of his wit and gift for observing and recording his impressions of people in order to give us in his memoirs a picture of his colleagues and superiors in the office, from M. Faradol, the chef de bureau, who was continually dancing about as he talked, to Magnol 'hâve et toussotant' who ate horsemeat so that his wife and son could eat beef, and, against the office regulations, ate his lunch in the office "la tête baissée, dans son tiroir ouvert." (p.25) When the public arrived the clerks had their reward - the satisfying feeling of being officials, which, says Guiches, allowed the company to get away with paying very little in wages.

From three o'clock till five Guiches was freed from any duties and able to take things easy. He read and thought. As yet he had no ideas and did not know what to write. He visited newspaper offices offering to write "des chroniques", but was turned down everywhere. He therefore spent his time reading:

Je lis. Je m'enthousiasme pour le mouvement naturaliste. J'y trouve des éléments essentiels à ma formation d'écrivain. Mais l'observation de la vie est encore, en moi, si rudimentaire! J'ai tant besoin de cette flânerie initiale qui est, pour l'écrivain, son approvisionnement et son apprentissage..." (p.28)

Guiches' wit, distinction and friendliness quickly won him many friends and opened many doors. He went out a good deal.

"Je vais avec eux aux courses, au tripot, au skating de la rue Blanche, dans les cafés de nuit et dans les cafés-concerts."

(p.33) He was introduced to many people including Toulouse-Lautrec, "un déjà grand monsieur, ce petit homme à tête de bossu aux yeux radieux et féroces, aux joues semées de boqueteaux noirs." (p.32)

But this idle round of pleasure did not satisfy Guiches.

"Je suis rompu et écoeuré". He decided he must do something worthwhile. He said to a friend, but the words were really meant for himself: "Tu es absurde idiot!" lui dis-je, "Tu vas rentrer chez toi. Après cette existence imbécile, tu vas claquemurer dans la solitude, ta sensibilité, ton coeur, ton esprit, ton talent quand tu as la chance de pouvoir faire une oeuvre qui durera par la force vitale que donnent, seules, la douleur et l'amour!" (p.35)

But during this period he tasted the frivolous distractions of Paris life, the noise and gaiety of the cafés and became familiar with the personalities of the variety halls and operettas. The names of performers such as Judic, José Dupuis, Baron, Lassouche, Léonce, Cooper, Jeanne Granier, Landrol all filled him with enthusiasm for the stage which was to return



later when he felt disappointed and disillusioned by his progress as a novelist. Although he did not seem to be achieving very much, he, for a time, enjoyed himself amidst the boisterous vulgarity of the capital:

Paulus m'étourdit et Thérèse m'émeut. Les poings sur les hanches, le buste renversé, les yeux flamboyants, un énorme trou béant dans la bouffissure des joues, ce qu'elle hurle ne vient pas d'elle. C'est une voix de la nature, de la patrie, du peuple en révolte, du vagabondage, de la crapule, de l'amour. C'est magnifiquement horrible et abominablement beau! (p.33)

Guiches resolved to tear himself away from these distractions:

"J'ai résolu d'agir. J'en ai pris vis-à-vis de moi-même, l'engagement. Le tiendrai-je?" (p.36) As a first step he went to see Albert Delpit, author of Fils de Coralie, with a recommendation from his aunt and Charles Buet, author of Le Prêtre and a friend of Francis Maratuech. Guiches was unimpressed by the former but took to Buet in whose house he met famous people like Barbey d'Aurevilly, who was then eighty years old, François Coppée, Léon Cladel, Maurice Rollinat ("le plus extraordinaire poète qui soit au monde" p.45) Leon Bloy, Emile Goudeau, Laurent Tailade, Joséphin Péladan and Jean Lorrain.

Guiches provides, in Au Banquet de la Vie, many pen-portraits of the famous men he met. Barbey d'Aurevilly was at that time treated like a king by the society of writers, actors and critics in which he moved. Barbey's extravagant appearance, he tells us, may have been "carnavalesque" but "le front qui est la façade d'un palais du génie, le port de la tête et l'autorité du regard enclouent, sur les lèvres des plus gouailleurs, le sourire naissant. (p.48) Guiches,



as the honest portrayer of reality, described what he saw,  
as he did when he met Léon Bloy:

Il grogne, mugit, ricane, et rit tour  
à tour comme Satan ou un enfant de chœur.  
Zoologiquement il a une tête de lamproie  
sur le corps onduleux que l'on attribue au  
serpent de mer, même au serpent d'église, car  
sa silhouette est celle d'un ophicléide debout.  
Humainement, il a de beaux gros yeux clairs  
où passent des regards d'assassin, des  
éblouissements de visionnaire, des larmes de martyr  
et des rires de bébé, car il y a, en lui, un  
être qui souffre, un Titan d'orgueil, un Cain  
de haine, un démoniaque et un premier communiant.  
Il est suave comme l'hostie et grossier comme le  
pain d'orge. Avec la même écume de rage, il  
prie Dieu et l'engueule. (p.52)

Returning from his evening with these great men he  
wrote: "Je rentre, la tête brûlante, l'esprit bouleversé.  
Décidément mon imbécile vie d'hier me semble morte." (p.55)

At Buet's Guiches saw and heard Rollinat sing and recite  
his own poetry and was deeply moved;<sup>2</sup> and Joséphin Péladan<sup>3</sup>  
whose work drew on the occult and the Old Testament, and the  
naturalist poet Jean Lorrain - "Il brasse l'humanité parisienne  
au jour le jour de ses chroniques et l'autre humanité, dans  
ses poèmes, avec des doigts impertinents, nerveux et volontaires  
qui en extraient des essences de beauté et en font jaillir des  
gaz de pourriture." (p.64)

Guiches listened to poets and writers reciting their work,  
from Rollinat singing of his native Berry, which was likely to  
remind Guiches of his own Quercy and point to this as an  
obvious source of inspiration for him, to Bloy bewailing the  
injustice of the public, ranting cynically against successful  
writers like Renan, Zola, Flaubert and Maupassant, and cursing  
God for his own suffering. At this time, in 1882, Guiches met  
and became a firm friend of Henri Lavedan<sup>4</sup> son of Philippe de  
Grandlieu of Le Figaro. He also met Sarah Bernhardt and her

son Maurice. At Sarah Bernhardt's house he met Catulle Mendès, François Coppée, Jean Richepin, Fernand Harancourt, and he witnessed the triumph of Rollinat singing his own songs at the piano. "Les yeux s'hallucinent au spectacle de cette tête qui, tranchée au col, posée sur une table rase, apparaît comme le chef livide, chevelu, et bouche ouverte d'un Saint Jean-Baptiste de la folie humaine." (p.94)

Guiches' interest in poetry had been rekindled by his enthusiastic reaction to meeting and listening to Rollinat. Before this experience, in February 1882 he had written to Maratuech: "J'ai renoncé à la poésie fugitive pour le grand roman de mœurs."<sup>5</sup> Despite his great admiration for Rollinat, however, Guiches denied that he was at all influenced by him: "Il n'a pas été pour moi un maître dirigeant ma pensée et contribuant à ma formation d'écrivain comme Barbey d'Aurevilly, Flaubert, Zola, Goncourt, Daudet, Maupassant, Huysmans, mais il a été le premier enthousiasme qui ait fait tressaillir ma sensibilité par la parole et le chant." (p.104)

Like other writers of his own and earlier generations, Guiches was fascinated by dreams and by the occult. He wrote to Maratuech in May, 1882, telling him of a short story he had written on "la vie rêvée" and expecting that Maratuech would find it rather bizarre. He had also, he said, begun what he called "l'histoire réaliste des rêves". Later, when Maratuech wrote describing Guiches' story as "une vision apocalyptique", Guiches replied that he had been obsessed by these macabre ideas for the past year and that he was pouring them out onto paper. This interest in the bizarre is reflected in La Pudeur de Sodome

and, especially, in Philippe Destal, where the nature of hallucination and obsession is explored at length. Although Guiches did not persist in exploiting his macabre interest in his later works he maintained a private interest in spiritualism which was also shared by his wife and daughter.<sup>6</sup>

In the company of Buet, Guiches made the round of poets and artists' garrets, where young men either played at being poor artists and enjoyed their destitution or genuinely saw their talents suffer in sickness and misery. The scenes Guiches described remind us forcibly of the dens of intellectual and other "outsiders" of the 1970's: "Les Hirsutes, rue de Rennes se réunissent dans une tannerie si enfumée que la mort les y surprendra si la menace de l'asphyxie ne les en chasse à temps [.....] Une horrible cuisson vaincue, les yeux distinguent, dans le brouillard, des rangées de chaises démantibulées, de tables boiteuses..." (p.106) He describes also the opening in 1882 in Montmartre of Le Chat Noir, a new café as a meeting place for writer and artists.

During this time Guiches contributed articles to Le Gallois, Gil Blas and to Feu Follet, a literary magazine founded by his friend from Quercy, Francis Maratuech, in 1880. Guiches wrote to Maratuech in 1882:

Mon article chôme toujours au Gallois. Meyer est un infâme prometteur avec lequel Buet s'est brouillé, et je vais probablement transporter mon oeuvre des cartons oubliettes de cette estimable rédaction pour la présenter au Gil Blas où l'accueil est généralement assez cordial.<sup>7</sup>

Guiches sent mainly Parisian portraits and short stories for publication in Feu Follet. When writing to Maratuech that he had written a novel on dreams, he quickly reassured him:

"Rassurez-vous, je n'enverrai à Feu Follet que du réalisme de bon aloi dont il n'aura point à s'effaroucher." <sup>8</sup>

Guiches, who had seen the great French politician Léon Gambetta only three years earlier inaugurating a war memorial in Cahors, witnessed his national funeral in 1882 from a vantage point in the Boulevard de Sébastopol in Paris. This compatriot of his was later to provide the inspiration for Guiches' novel about the destructive power of politics, La Tueuse (1921). Always impatient of ignorance and sensitive to impropriety and injustice, Guiches wrote critically of the behaviour of the crowd which had stoned Gambetta's carriage ten years earlier in Cahors and of that of the crowd at his funeral in Paris whose enthusiasm turned the occasion into a celebration.

Guiches met at the Chat Noir a young poet, Maurice Donnay, <sup>9</sup> who was to be his close friend for the rest of his life. At the same time, in 1882, Charles Buet, who had been Guiches' guide in the writer's world of Paris, departed for the provinces, reintroducing Guiches, however, before his departure, to Barbey d'Aurevilly, whose conversation excited and enthralled him. Writing to Maratuech in 1882, Guiches said that he had intended to send him "la chronique Barbey", but as the subject was so overdone in Paris, he had decided not to. "Il souffle ici un terrible vent à la d'Aurevilly, et le sujet devient trop rebattu." <sup>10</sup> It is possible that the portrait was eventually published in Feu Follet as in September 1882 Guiches promised that he would send it to Maratuech. <sup>11</sup> This portrait is undoubtedly the one which finally appeared in Guiches' memoirs. <sup>12</sup>

"Il parle et la pauvreté, déjà, s'est enfuie de la chambre; il parle et jette les images, les anecdotes, les portraits, les descriptions, les ripostes, l'éloquence et l'esprit comme si ce pauvre magnifique lançait des poignées d'or aux admirateurs que, tout à l'heure, navrait sa pauvreté."

## Notes to Chapter 2

1. Letter to Francis Maratuech, quoted by Henri Austruy, op.cit., Vol. 143, p.106.
2. Maurice Rollinat impressed Guiches particularly as a poet who wrote about his native Berry. In Au Banquet de la Vie Guiches wrote; "C'est la terre natale qui, avec lui, chante et s'éploie. C'est elle qui réclame son poète, son enfant prodigue et prodige." (Chapter II, p.60) See Appendix A(ii) for a letter to Guiches from Buet, in which he refers to Rollinat, Le Chat Noir and Barbey d'Aurevilly.
3. Joséphin Péladin (1859-1918) did not impress Guiches favourably. In Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter II, p.63, Guiches wrote, "Il est, lui-même, son unique boisson. Il se déguste, il se sirote."
4. Henri Lavedan (1859-1940), collaborated with Guiches to write two short plays which made up Les Quarts d'Heure, performed by Antoine at the Théâtre Libre in 1888, after the publication of the Manifeste des Cinq and forming part of a programme of plays by the signatories to the Manifeste. Bonnetain and Descaves together wrote La Pelote and Paul Margueritte wrote a pantomime entitled Pierrot. In Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre Libre, Paris, A. Fayard, 1921, Antoine wrote, Les Quarts d'heure"(....) sont pleins d'une cruelle et incisive ironie qui a beaucoup porté." (Entry for 28 March 1888)  
Lavedan and Guiches were also to collaborate in the writing of Le Café Concert, in 1896, a witty survey of the 'cafconce' in an expensive limited edition with illustrations by J.L. Forain. The project was under-subscribed, however, and the work was therefore never written. See also Note 12.
5. Letter to Francis Maratuech, 28 February 1882, op.cit., p.219.
6. Guiches' daughter believed in clairvoyance and automatic writing. General Pierre Keller told me that Guiches had told him of an occasion when he was having difficulty with a scene for one of his plays, Marguerite had called up Alexandre Dumas Fils, who had then solved his problem.
7. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, op.cit., Vol. 143, p.280, letter dated 1882.

8. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, op.cit., Vol. 143, p.282, letter dated 30 May 1882. In a letter dated 10 June 1882, to Maratuech, Guiches sent him Nadine, probably a short story for the next issue of Feu Follet. (Lettres à F.M., p.282) In a letter dated 27 June 1883, he sent Maratuech a chronique on Le Chat Noir. (Lettres à F.M. 4 série 144-145 la N.R. 1936 Juillet-Octobre.)
9. Maurice Donnay (1859-1945), who became an Academician in 1907, was Guiches' advocate in the Académie Française when he was awarded the Prix Toirac for his play, Vouloir in 1913. See Appendix A(vii).
10. Lettres à F.M., op.cit., p.279, letter dated 1882.
11. Lettres à F.M., op.cit., p.287, letter dated 20 September 1882.
12. Au Banquet de la Vie, 1925. Ed. Spes, pp.46-56.

## CHAPTER 3

Beginnings of Success. 1886

The fruit of Guiches' experiences, perhaps, most of all, the result of the profound experience of meeting once again the inspiring personality of Barbey d'Aurevilly, was the germ of the idea for his first novel.

Ce que j'ai tant souhaité, l'idée à laquelle, comme les autres, je tenterai de donner la vie, est venue à moi. L'ange ou le démon que tous nous portons en nous a présenté à mon imagination une brune et pâle jeune fille de mon pays... J'ai commencé, et maintenant, ce n'est plus par un travail que je suis pris, mais par une passion, un amour. Je ne vois guère plus personne. Quelquefois je lis un chapitre à Henri Lavedan qui veut bien m'encourager... (p.129)

The original inspiration for the novel seems open to conjecture. The name Emma Bovary was to be mentioned frequently for the similarity of subject, but it is unlikely that Céleste Prudhomat owes more than a superficial debt to Flaubert's novel. Reference has also been made to the timing of the appearance of Guiches' novel, which coincided with the passing of new educational legislation, a fact which gave the novel the air of an anti-establishment treatise, supporting the government's critics. The basis for Guiches' heroine may well be traceable to an incident in his own family. An uncle in the Folmont branch of the Bercegol family had seduced his children's governess. The family, not unnaturally, wished to draw a veil of secrecy over the matter and when Céleste Prudhomat appeared they were outraged that he should have revealed the matter to the whole world. The family quarrelled with Guiches and would have nothing more to do with him. His novel was banned from the house. On the other hand, Guiches was totally unaware



that his novel would be likely to give offence at Folmont. If he knew the story of his uncle's liaison, and since he seldom visited Quercy at that time it is possible that he did not know, he certainly did not expect Céleste's story to be linked with it. He wrote to Maratuech on 17th September, 1886 that although he did not want him to lend his copy of Céleste Prudhomat to anyone else, since he wanted people to buy it, he did not mind Maratuech giving a selected reading of it at Folmont, as they had always been kind to him there.<sup>1</sup>

At all events, Guiches' method was clearly to follow the example of the Goncourts. He wrote to Maratuech on 27 June, 1883:

Je travaille sérieusement à mon roman. J'ai l'ambition de fixer sur le papier une étude consciencieuse des mœurs locales en 1880, et, comme cette oeuvre quelque peu écrasante comporte une observation ultra-méticuleuse je n'avance que péniblement et avec d'infinis efforts. Le titre me sourit. Je vous le livre. J'appelle mon oeuvre Mademoiselle Prudhomat. C'est "simple" et "de bon goût", et il me semble que ce dérivatif féminisé de Prudhomme exprime suffisamment le type essentiellement scolaire de mon institutrice.<sup>2</sup>

On the publication of the novel three years later, in 1886, Guiches wrote to Maratuech that he was expecting the novel to unleash "une tempête bourgeoise", which would not upset him in the least: "et je ne vous cacherai pas que cette indignation dont ici l'on rira fortement sera pour moi la consécration et la récompense de mes efforts. Donc je l'attends avec une allégresse anticipée."

The "tempête bourgeoise" he expected would be in the provinces and particularly perhaps in Quercy. "Ici", that is in Paris, it would not cause indignation, he believed. So

Guiches did not expect the educational, but rather the social implications of his novel to be the controversial ones. He did not foresee any political reaction, but he did enjoy the prospect of the provincial bourgeoisie being discomfited. There appears to be no thought in his mind of family scandals.

Meanwhile Guiches accepted the invitation of a friend to collaborate on Le Limousin, a bi-weekly journal, for a disappointing 100 francs a month, which soon led to complications for him at the Compagnie du Gaz. Guiches was told that political reactions to his writing could bring about his dismissal. He therefore decided not to write any more for the newspaper.

Returning home to Albas for a holiday Guiches enjoyed the warmth and affectionate regard of his parents and great prestige among his acquaintances:

Obéissant à son orgueil paternel et aussi à la passion d'embellir qui sévit en tout méridional, mon père a dû, non par des paroles précises, car il répugne au mensonge, mais par des sous-entendus, par des haussements de sourcils et des hochements de tête qui en disent long, fortifier cette opinion à laquelle je dois les plus flatteurs égards, car on me parle avec une sourde admiration de mes hautes et délicates fonctions, de ma responsabilité, du rôle que je dois jouer dans les graves conflits de l'Administration avec la ville... (p.139)

(A reference to the legal battle between the Gas Company and the town of Paris)

To his astonishment his family even asked him to read some of his novel: "Par quel miracle de tendresse ont-ils sacrifié leurs répugnances, et en sont-ils venus à m'exprimer ce désir, à me parler de mon roman, sans ajouter, sur la première voyelle, l'accent circonflexe de dégoût sous lequel ils écrasaient ce mot?" (p.140)

Guiches obviously expected his parents to be highly critical of his achievements and unimpressed by his novel. On the contrary his mother took a great liking to Céleste, thinking of her as the object of her son's affection rather than the product of his imagination. His father "ne voit pas dans mon roman une histoire d'amour, mais une passion qui punit la sottise d'une ambition sociale et une attaque puissamment menée contre l'école sans Dieu. Ce n'est certes ni ma pensée ni mon but; mais que m'importe! Il s'intéresse à mon effort d'écrivain. Son affection m'a sacrifié une résistance qui chagrinait nos rapports et qui maintenant a ramené nos coeurs à la simple intimité du temps de mon enfance." (p.141)

He returned to Paris after a happy holiday, wondering whether he would see them again as they were ageing so much. On his return he discovered that he had lost his job. The Compagnie du Gaz had had to reduce its staff because of its legal action against the City of Paris. Faced by the alternatives of either going back home to seek security "dans la souffrance humiliée" or remaining in Paris in "l'incertitude angoissée", he chose to remain in Paris.

He abandoned his novel for a while and wrote a number of provincial tales which he then posted off to four newspapers and two magazines. To his great joy, Le Figaro Littéraire published his 'nouvelle', Le Dernier exploit d'un huissier. He was delighted to receive sixty-four francs for it and promptly wrote to the editor suggesting a series. He was invited to submit work occasionally but without any promise of publication.

Another 'nouvelle' was published in Paris Illustré, L'Orage aux champs and for this he was paid 500 francs.

The remaining four 'nouvelles' were not published. However, Guiches had now finished his novel and was concerned about how to have it published. His friend Henri Lavedan arrived opportunely and introduced him to the new publishing house of La Librairie de la Presse.

Guiches was apprehensive in parting with his manuscript as he had no copy:

C'est, un effet, un arrachement. J'en ai un cri intérieur. Je ne suis plus l'amant de la passionnée de qui j'ai aimé l'amour et de qui j'ai souffert la douleur. Je me sens un père remettant son enfant au mari qui va méconnaître son âme dans la hâte de saccager son corps. Et le voilà qui, devant moi, la déshabille, la palpe, lui soulève la jupe en me disant des choses d'une vulgarité blessante:-

'Croyez-vous que ça fasse trois cents pages? Le titre est bon. Il annonce une jeune fille... roman réaliste... naturaliste... le public ne s'embêtera pas... moeurs de province... Parfait... La province est à la mode...' (p.162-3)

The novel was accepted. The co-director of La Librairie de la Presse, Gustave de Malherbe, told Guiches he was looking for new writers. Zola's great service to literature, he said, had been to make the public read, but now Naturalism was less fashionable and the only two talents it had since engendered were Maupassant and Huysmans. These two, "d'inspiration différente, de puissance égale", were, according to Malherbe "déjà mal à l'aise et à l'étroit dans le document humain. Il leur faut davantage. Et ce surplus c'est la troisième génération, la vôtre, qui va nous l'apporter. Elle épurera le naturalisme. Elle substituera, au procédé, des formules plus simples et plus vraies, à l'étude exclusive des pourritures

sociales, une observation plus large et plus impartiale, qui ne bannira ni la beauté ni l'élégance, et je crois qu'elle voudra donner un souffle animateur à l'imperson<sup>n</sup>alité vraiment trop vigoureuse du reportage actuel." (p.168)

While at La Librairie de la Presse, Guiches met other writers like Léon Cladel, from the Causse, who arrived looking like a Tolstoy peasant "ratatiné, fluët, nerveux, secouant une chevelure barbare - et une voix, énorme, sauvage, une voix de Démosthène de grands chemins dont l'accent broie tous les cailloux qu'il a mis dans sa bouche." (p.170) Cladel had brought his manuscript of Dux, which consisted of notes on the character of Charles Baudelaire whom he knew well. Octave Mirbeau, too, burst into the publisher's office one day when Guiches was there. Guiches calls him a champion of misjudged geniuses and crusher of exaggerated reputations.

Guiches' novel was to be the first of a new series, La Librairie Moderne, and the publisher undertook to publish all his other works. The new series was to include also works brought by other writers whom Guiches met at the publishers' office: Henri Lavedan's Lydie, George Rodenbach's L'Art en Exil, Edouard Rod, Caran d'Ache, Grosclaude, and Bonnetain who brought l'Opium and L'Extrême-Orient for publication. Guiches was impatient to meet the writer of Äxel, to be published by the Librairie, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, whose Contes cruels and L'Eve future had deeply impressed him.

Céleste Prudhomat was published in 1886. Guiches was at once impatient to read the reviews. Francisque Sarcey, the stern critic of the République Française, devoted four columns

to welcoming and praising the new novel, comparing it to a rich meal. Edmond Sée wrote to Guiches: "J'aime à la passion cette petite soeur de Madame Bovary si lamentable et si finement excitante."<sup>3</sup> On a visit to Sarcey to thank him for his article Guiches told him "Je vais continuer ma série de province", and Sarcey approved, "C'est ça.", and promised to be "un lecteur, un juge, un ami." (p.189)

Zola complimented Guiches on his novel. Believing it was documented after his own manner, he remarked, "On voit que vous êtes du métier et que vous avez pu l'étudier sur place."<sup>4</sup> Guiches pointed out that he had no need of special documentation.

At last Guiches met Villiers de l'Isle-Adam of whom he was to be a close friend until Villiers' death in 1889. "Toute personnalité", wrote Guiches, "se nourrit de personnalités, et l'originalité n'est qu'une supériorité de l'assimilation."<sup>5</sup> Villiers was fifty years of age and Guiches only twenty-six. Guiches was an acute observer of the personalities of his day and has left us a vivid and valuable description of many of them. His study of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam is recorded in his memoirs Au Banquet de la Vie and further, in La Nouvelle Revue of 1 May 1890, after Villiers' death. He considered him to be "un être irremplaçable" but denied that he was influenced by him in any way in his writing.

Guiches, who had been living at 25, rue de Provence, moved, in the middle of 1886, to 100, rue St Lazare. He wrote to Maratuech that he found it "un numéro déplorable" but appropriate to "mon tempérament naturaliste".<sup>6</sup> He thought this must be the noisiest street in Paris, but he found it quite

conducive to work. He was able to isolate himself from it "dans mes évocations champêtres." After the success of Céleste Prudhomat, newspapers began to publish his chronicles of Parisian and literary life. Le Figaro, Gil Blas, and Le Grand Journal were the principal vehicles for his brilliant wit and powers of observation and he faithfully recorded the Paris scene in this way for twenty years. (See Appendix C (xi) and (xii)) After the First World War, he was a regular contributor also to Comœdia. José Germain, in 1935, referred to Guiches as having been "le parfait journaliste".

In the contemporary literary scene Guiches saw the division between the two camps of Naturalism and Symbolism. He was familiar with members of both camps. Stephane Mallarmé, the leader of the Symbolists, expressed himself with "la plus limpide clarté" and Guiches defended him against accusations of "une recherche d'originalité". "La déconcertante construction de sa phrase" wrote Guiches, "a, pour cause, la dévotion à la syntaxe, poussée jusqu'au délire." (p.200) Henri de Régnier, "un lyrique d'inspiration impérieusement personnelle" (p.202), and Jules Laforgue "libre et adorable génie" (p.202), were also much appreciated by Guiches.

The Revue Indépendante published poems by the Symbolists and also works by the Naturalist prose writers, Gustave Geffroy, Jean Ajalbert, Paul Bonnetain, J.H. Rosny, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte and Guiches himself. The other five wrote a short novel or short story, published by Dujardin. Guiches wrote his La Pudeur de Sodome (1888), which was illustrated

by the famous 'maître gravier' Félicien Rops, to Guiches' great delight. "L'œuvre de Rops est d'une colossale puissance, et tout ce qui surgit de symbole autour de ce Moloch du pharisaïsme est d'une incroyable grandeur." (p.208)



Notes to Chapter 3

1. Lettres à F.M., op.cit., Vol. 144-145, p.46.  
Madame Henri Bourboulon, a niece of Guiches, told me that she had been told by her mother that Céleste Prudhomat was the story of an uncle in the family at Folmont who had seduced the teacher of his children. Madame Bourboulon and Monsieur Jean Pagès also told me that there was a family quarrel after the novel was published.
2. Lettres à F.M., op.cit., p.39.
3. Quoted by Henri Austruy, op.cit., Vol. 141, p.265.
4. Quoted by Paul-Adrien Schayé - Les Avant Premières. Gustave Guiches et Vouloir - Comœdia 13 May 1913.
5. Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter VII, p.189.
6. Lettres à F.M. - op.cit., p.48, letter dated July, 1886.

## CHAPTER 4

The Manifesto - Consequences and Implications  
1887

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In 1887 Le Figaro of 18 August published on its front page an open letter to Emile Zola, headed La Terre. This letter, since known as Le Manifeste des Cinq contre la Terre, was an attack by a group of young writers on Zola's continued and growing preoccupation with ugliness and obscenity in those chapters of La Terre which had been published. The authors of this protest detailed their disapproval of Zola's growing tendency towards "l'ordure". Speaking on behalf of all young writers they declared that Zola's contribution to literature in his vigorous battle to establish Naturalism had won their fervent support but that, since L'Assommoir (1877), they had been increasingly disappointed and disillusioned, although none of them had dared to express his heresy publicly. The writers did not content themselves with literary criticism but attacked Zola personally, suggesting physical reasons for his preoccupations with sex. "Les uns attribuaient la chose à la maladie des bas organes de l'écrivain" and "Jeune, il fut très pauvre, très timide, et la femme qu'il n'a point connue, à l'âge où l'on doit la connaître, le hante d'une vision évidemment fausse. Puis, le trouble d'équilibre qui résulte de sa maladie rénale contribue sans doute à l'inquiéter outre mesure de certaines fonctions, le pousse à grossir leur importance."<sup>1</sup> They suggested that his obsession might be the result of anxiety about his own sexuality. The five signatures which appeared at the bottom of this letter, which occupied two full columns, were those of Paul Bonnetain,

J.H. Rosny, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte and Gustave Guiches.

Guiches was far from being the prime mover in this protest. All five were part of a larger group which met at the Taverne Anglaise in the rue d'Amsterdam, regularly forming 'Le Dîner des Fortifs'. Others included Huysmans, Hennique, Raffaelli, Ajalbert, Céard, Frantz-Jourdain, Gustave Geffroy and Abel Hermant. Five among them meeting frequently, exchanging ideas, sharing a common passion for literature and being of approximately the same age - none of them was as yet thirty "se sont trouvés groupés sans avoir nullement concerté cette association."<sup>2</sup>

Bonnetain was the leader of the group by virtue of his being the eldest, but Rosny, too, had, according to Guiches, all the qualities of a leader. Paul Margueritte was more of an introvert and modest. Lucien Descaves was the youngest and was characterized, Guiches wrote, by an eternal indignation against injustice and falsehood. "L'indignation est l'état dans lequel Descaves a décidé de vivre." (p.215)

They were "camarades de lettres", according to Guiches, who gathered together when "un égal souci, peut-être excessif, en tout cas légitime, leur suggéra l'idée et la promulgation d'un manifeste."<sup>3</sup> Their aim was to dissociate themselves from Naturalism "tel qu'il s'étale aujourd'hui. "Nous désirons abjurer une doctrine que nous avons aimée dans son intégrité, mais que nous répudions dans son usage actuel." (p.216)

Guiches defended their action in Au Banquet (1925).

Although he had already written in a letter to Lucien Descaves published in L'Intransigeant of 22 June 1924, "Je garde un souvenir penaud et contrit de cette folle incartade de jeunesse",<sup>3</sup> nonetheless, he considered their motives were good and reasonable. A disciple, he said, carries the torch for his master. Public opinion sees him as a torch-bearer and not as a writer in his own right. Therefore they could not let it pass.

Guiches was clear that Paul Bonnetain was the one who first conceived the idea of the manifesto. Guiches says, in his memoirs, that Bonnetain was the editor-in-chief of the Figaro 'Supplément Littéraire' and all five were accepted by the director Périvier as collaborators on the paper. Recent research has shown, however, that on this point Guiches' memory is at fault.<sup>4</sup> They met two or three times a week and it was Bonnetain's idea to organise the five as a reply to the "Cinq de Médan". Guiches claims in his memoirs that he opposed the idea as "hasardeuse", and as "comique" since they were not acquainted with Zola individually and could, therefore, scarcely disown him. This, in fact, was the attitude taken by Zola himself after the publication. Bonnetain was irritated by Guiches' disapproval and did not discuss it with him again, but Guiches presumed that he must have done so with Descaves who was a closer friend.

The next Guiches heard was from Paul Margueritte who said that Rosny had told him that events were "sur le point d'éclater". Bonnetain had spoken to Magnard, the editor of Le Figaro, and Magnard wanted to publish it at once on the

front page of Le Figaro. They must, therefore, speed up the preparation of the Manifesto. Margueritte sent it to Guiches: "La voici, Rosny demande que nous en prenions conscience. Bien entendu, il sera tenu compte de nos observations. Nous n'avons qu'à les mentionner, mais les circonstances exigent qu'après les signatures de Bonnetain, de Rosny et de Descaves nous apposions les nôtres." (p.219) Margueritte and Guiches together read the draft of the Manifesto and were disturbed by it. Guiches objected to the use of the word "dictamen". They signed it after expressing their view that it should be toned down and, Rosny having agreed to this, "nous apposons nos signatures les sachant avec celles qui les précèdent en la plus honorable et cordiale compagnie." (p.223) However, the text was published unaltered the very next day, bringing down upon their heads what Guiches called "un gigantesque ouragan de mitraille." (p.224) (See Appendix D(i) for the full text.)

It is obvious from Guiches' account that Bonnetain was the prime mover of the venture with Rosny the business manager. The others were there to add the support of their names. The suggestion that Goncourt was directly behind the whole thing is not proven,<sup>5</sup> but Bonnetain and Rosny had just been visiting Goncourt and Rosny wrote in Torches et Lumignons that their aim was to "faire plaisir à Goncourt, en qui Bonnetain voyait le roi des lettres".<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Rosny was afterwards included in the Testament Goncourt instead of Henri Céard, which suggests that it was a reward for services rendered.

At all events Margueritte and Guiches had no such allegiance and their intentions were clearly honourable and sincere. Descaves seems to have gone along with the idea under pressure from Bonnetain and Rosny but with undoubtedly an already strong sense of indignation against Zola for what he believed to be his excesses.

The result of the Manifesto was "une explosion formidable... En quelques instants nous sommes honnis, conspués, insultés, flétris, bafoués, traînés dans la boue en toutes les langues du monde, en anglais, en italien, en allemand, en russe, en scandinave, en espagnol, en portugais, même en français et aussi par des Français qui n'écrivent pas en français!" (p.224) The five authors were satirized in the press and in the cafés. Jules Jouy sang at Le Chat Noir:

Ils étaient cinq petits enfants  
Qui chassaient les gros éléphants (p.225)

The storm eventually subsided. Anatole France proclaimed in an impassioned article on La Terre in La Vie Littéraire that the Manifesto was justified in its protest against Zola's debasement of human existence, but that it was inexcusable for its authors to attack Zola personally as they had done. Nonetheless France agreed with their verdict on La Terre and wrote "Jamais homme n'avait fait pareil effort pour avilir l'humanité, insulter à toutes les images de la beauté et de l'amour, nier tout ce qui est bon et tout ce qui est bien." (p.235) All the authors of the Manifesto, except Bonnetain, who died in 1899, later admitted their mistake, Margueritte in a letter to Zola in 1892 and the others made public disavowals in the 1920s. Guiches' disavowal, as we have seen, was made in 1924 in a letter to Lucien Descaves in l'Intransigeant.

The final result of the Manifesto, after the storm had died down, was as if it had never been. Zola was apparently unaffected by it, although his next work, Le Rêve, was a break from his violent novels. "J'en ai été stupéfié - Je ne connais pas ces jeunes gens... La situation est originale, il faut en convenir."<sup>7</sup> The publication of the instalments of La Terre continued. The Five's mistake was in blaming Zola for describing the realities of a world whose injustices and awfulness even the Symbolists saw and were anxious to escape from. Their own work was generally a portrayal of reality which lacked the vigour and vitality of Zola's. In 1890 in Les Romanciers d'Aujourd'hui, Charles Le Goffic declared that the authors of the Manifesto were not free from blame. "Seuls M. Guiches et M. Descaves pouvaient prétendre dans le groupe à une chasteté relative. Encore le premier a-t-il commis quelques pages sur les maladies honteuses où il ne faudrait point trop s'arrêter."<sup>8</sup>

On the 28 March, 1888 at the Théâtre-Libre of Antoine, plays by four of the signatories of the Manifesto Paul Bonnetain, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte and Guiches were performed. Guiches and Lavedan had each written a short play under the title of Les Quarts d'Heure. Guiches wrote in Le Spectacle that the theatre was crowded. Daudet and his wife, and Goncourt sat on the right, Zola with Céard, Alexis and friends sat on the left. Afterwards the protesters and their supporters celebrated their success with Antoine at Bonnetain's house in the rue Ballu.<sup>9</sup>

Guiches and Lavedan had proposed their short plays to Antoine before the publication of the Manifesto. Antoine records this in Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre-Libre in his

entry for 7 August, 1887. He also indicated that the evening was a success, that the authors had talent but that "visible-ment le public littéraire n'a pas approuvé leur démonstration contre le maître de Médan."<sup>10</sup> According to Antoine, Zola found the evening interesting but he had expected innovations. "Cependant pour lui elle n'a pas révélé la nouvelle forme théâtrale qu'il attendait d'eux après leur récent éclat."<sup>11</sup>

Antoine also reports that the signatories of the Manifeste had not given up their attack on Zola and that they had drafted a new letter to the press, which Antoine, as an admirer of Zola, did not like: "car rien ne peut amoindrir mon admiration pour Zola, et j'ai toujours peu goûté un geste inutile et pénible."<sup>12</sup>

Three years after the publication of the Manifeste des Cinq and on the publication of Zola's La Bête Humaine (1890), Guiches still believed that the protest had been justified. He wrote in his notes (See Appendix D (iii)) that the five protesters had not been a cohesive group: "Nullement solidaires, nullement enregistrés dans le naturalisme, différents les uns des autres, gardant chacun l'indépendance absolue de sa pensée, unis seulement par une réciprocité d'estime intellectuelle, les cinq s'étaient rencontrés dans l'expression d'un même sentiment." This again seems to suggest that Guiches was unaware of any conspiracy. As far as he was concerned, the Manifeste was a genuine and sincere protest and he firmly believed his fellow signatories to be equally spontaneous and uncoerced.

Though he admitted that perhaps some of the terms were excessively pompous, he claimed that its tone was no more



lyrical than that used by Zola himself when attacking the dictatorship of Victor Hugo. Writers who have become successful, Guiches declared, should not expect to be judged only by a special high court: "Mais Zola est un écrivain démocratique. Il s'est déclaré lui-même justiciable du suffrage universel et, par ce fait, a pleinement absous de témérité quiconque s'aventurerait à formuler sur ses livres une consciencieuse opinion." Guiches also maintained that if the protesters were indeed to be compared, as they had been, with pygmies rising up against a Titan, it was logical also to consider Zola an invisible atom beside the giant of Les Misérables, L'Homme qui rit and Les Travailleurs de la Mer. Clearly Guiches was by no means penitent. In fact, this latest protest was an attack on Zola's La Bête Humaine, beside which Guiches found even La Terre acceptable:

Dans ce livre comme dans ceux qui l'ont devancé le milieu décrit manque d'âme. Seules ses dépendances matérielles sont créées au microscope, leurs proportions grandies jusqu'à l'invraisemblable par un maître décorateur.

In other words, Guiches claimed, the predictions of the Manifeste had been fulfilled: "L'article [the Manifeste] signalait une déviation prochaine, un nouvel aiguisage dans la vie littéraire et dans l'oeuvre de M. Zola."

Guiches criticised Zola's characters as soulless and based on superficial observation:

Les chemins de fer sont bien indiqués et l'on n'ignore pas que M. Zola a parcouru de nombreux kilomètres sur la plate-forme d'une locomotive de la Compagnie de l'Ouest.(...) Les personnages ou plutôt les héros de La Bête Humaine tuent parce que leurs ancêtres ont tué. L'explication est simple. Grâce à cette importation d'une loi pathologique promulguée par M. Lombroso, mais que lui du moins étudie, tout travail d'analyse se trouve radicalement supprimé.

Guiches was by now less critical of the characters in La Terre: "Encore dans La Terre, les personnages étaient-ils mieux expliqués. Ils se présentaient d'ailleurs dans la simplicité d'êtres de nature, dénués de complication." The phrase "dénués de complication" had been an indictment of Zola's characters in the text of the Manifeste. Now Guiches uses it as a mark of approval.

It is not difficult to understand why Guiches objected to the pseudo-scientific aspect of Zola's writing. This view, which accurately diagnoses the great writer's principal weakness, has been confirmed by posterity. The added element of animosity which is apparent in Guiches' attack suggests that he was still sensitive to the criticism which had been levelled against the Five. But, despite his temporary addiction to the artificial devices of Naturalism with its innovations of style, he never allowed himself to impose a strait-jacket on his characters or his stories. The philosophy of Positivism was ridiculed in L'Imprévu and when he treated the theme of heredity in Philippe Destal (1892), he was to illustrate the insidious forces involved in a much more sensitive way.

On the occasion of Guiches' funeral in 1935, Joseph Germain of the Société des Gens de Lettres, in a reference to the Manifeste des Cinq, made the point that Guiches had been bitterly disappointed by Zola's La Terre, especially since Guiches felt a particular affection for the land: "Guiches était le poète du naturalisme. Il avait attendu, espéré La Terre comme une synthèse du réalisme, comme une symphonie merveilleuse du sol auquel l'atavisme nous rive par l'amour. Guiches était l'amant de la terre. Il fut profondément déçu."<sup>13</sup>

After making allowance for the customary eulogising demanded by the occasion, it must be acknowledged that Germain was right. Although Guiches had been anxious and impatient to leave Albas for Paris when he was twenty-one, he had, by 1887, had time to see his native Quercy with different eyes. Even before he left, indeed, he had begun to realise, as he tells us in his memoirs, how much his place of birth really meant to him. Moreover, Guiches, despite his momentary addiction to the artificial stylistic devices of Naturalism, never falsified the basic truth of his setting.

After the Manifeste Le Goffic says that Bonnetain, Rosny and Margueritte broke away from the movement and became individualist but:

M. Guiches et M. Descaves, dont une attitude presque décente légitimait les scrupules, la déclaration signée, n'en conservaient pas moins dans leurs livres tous les vieux procédés de l'école, s'attardaient au moule suranné de la phrase naturaliste, aux descriptions, aux anti-thèses, aux hyperboles, donnaient dans le trompe-l'oeil de l'hérédité et gardaient ineffaçablement sur eux la dure et rude empreinte du maître qu'ils venaient de renier.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless the Manifeste des Cinq went into history as a momentary explosion of protest by a group of young writers who made the headlines because of the stature of the victim. It did not alter the course of events but it marked the declining trend of the naturalist novel, apart perhaps from Zola's, as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close and the Symbolists and the "Psychologues" like Paul Bourget, France and Barrès were gradually taking over. During Jules Huret's enquiry Enquête sur le Naturalisme - l'Evolution Littéraire published in L'Echo de Paris in 1891, Paul Alexis

sent his famous telegram to Huret declaring "Naturalisme pas mort. Lettre suit." From Huret's enquiry it was apparent that the vast influence of Naturalism was still breathing and that, as Pierre Cogny writes in Le Naturalisme: "il a creusé un profond sillon que les ans auront peine à combler."<sup>15</sup>

Guiches was one of the writers who responded to Huret's appeal for his views. He agreed that "le naturalisme avait été inhumé par erreur et qu'il était on ne peut mieux portant."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless Guiches considered that Naturalism "a subi toutefois de fortes dislocations," and that no single school had taken over from it, since the Symbolists were divided amongst themselves. The fading fashion of literary schools was not regretted by Guiches who believed that the independence of a writer would allow him to realise the maximum of his personality.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Le Figaro, 18 August, 1887. See Appendix D(i) for the full text.
2. Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter VIII, p.213. See also Guy Robert, La Terre d'Emile Zola, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1952, pp.417-439, and A.A. Greaves Paul Bonnetain, His Life and Works, Ph.D. Thesis Nottingham, 1965, Part I, pp.25-27. See also Appendix D(iii) for Guiches' comments in 1890.
3. L'Intransigeant, 22 June, 1924. See Appendix E for Guiches' comment to his nephew.
4. A.A. Greaves, op.cit., p.29, suggests that Guiches' memory was sometimes at fault in his memoirs. He points out that Bonnetain was under contract to Gil Blas at the time of the publication of the Manifeste and did not join Le Supplément Littéraire du Figaro until January, 1888.
5. See A.A. Greaves, op.cit., p.26.
6. J.H. Rosny, Torches et Lumignons, 1921, Paris, p.222.
7. Quoted by Henri Austruy, op.cit., p.20.
8. Charles le Goffic, Les Romanciers d'Aujourd'hui, L. Vanier, 1890, p.29. The phrase "les maladies honteuses" is undoubtedly a reference to Jayan in L'Ennemi having contracted venereal disease in his youth. See L'Ennemi, Paris, Librairie Moderne, 1887, p.275.
9. Le Spectacle, Paris, Editions Spes, 1931, pp.34-42.
10. Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre Libre, Fayard, 1921 Entry for 28 March 1888.
11. Ibid. Entry for 30 March 1888.
12. Ibid. Entry for 27 March 1888. See Appendix D(ii) for the text of this second letter.
13. Gustave Guiches, Vie et Oeuvre, Henri Austruy, p.168.
14. Charles le Goffic, op.cit., p.29.
15. Pierre Cogny, Le Naturalisme, Armand Colin, Paris, p.115.
16. Letter from Guiches to Jules Huret and reproduced by him in his Enquête sur l'Evolution Littéraire, Paris, Charpentier, 1891, pp.255-258.

Friendships with Villiers, Bloy and Huysmans  
1887-1894

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Guiches still believed that his future struggle to succeed as a writer would be a hard one. The literary world was overcrowded and full of rivalry and jealousy. "On travaille des dents. On se montre les dents. On s'invective. On s'attaque. On se défend. Et tout cela sans pouvoir bouger! C'est à devenir fou!" He still considered himself as an outsider struggling to succeed in a maelstrom of human activity, some of it admirable and some contemptible:

Je vais être spectateur de beaux efforts, de basses manoeuvres, m'aventurer dans des salons authentiques, dans des salons truqués, discerner la passion vraie, l'amour véral, les vils négoces dans les désordonnés soubresauts de cette chaudière parisienne qui bout à gros bouillons.

Mais ne pourrai-je donc plus admirer? Faudra-t-il que je devienne, moi aussi le forcené lutteur, ne voyant en l'homme posté devant moi, soit-il un homme de génie qu'un dos me barrant la route et que je dois jeter à terre pour l'enjamber et passer?...

Jamais je ne pourrai! Jamais je n'ai eu l'impression d'être si effroyablement seul dans une telle multitude... (p.8)

Nevertheless, Guiches had a personal charm which won him access to a good many influential and important people.<sup>2</sup> He became a close friend of Henri Lavedan and Gustave Malherbe who were particularly useful to him in the publishing world, and also of great writers like Villiers de l'Isle Adam and J.K. Huysmans.

With Henri Lavedan, Guiches was invited by the Maison Quantin to write a special study called Le Café-Concert, a short portrait of a place of enjoyment which was typical of the era, and one which was painted most effectively at the same period by Toulouse-Lautrec. The book was to be a limited edition to be illustrated by J.L. Forain. In fact the project came to nothing, although some work was done on it and a

publisher's proof, which survives in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal<sup>3</sup> in Paris, gives us an idea of what it would have been like.

Le Manifeste des Cinq was not the only letter of protest which carried Guiches' signature. In a letter in Le Figaro of 24 December 1889 he joined many other writers in protesting against the intended prosecution of Lucien Descaves for his novel Sous-offs.<sup>4</sup> Others who signed included Zola, Edmond de Goncourt, Paul Bourget, Bonnetain and Barrès. The prosecution took place, but the jury acquitted Descaves of a charge of attacking the Army in his novel.

Guiches visited the offices of the Librairie Moderne regularly as he was engaged to read for the firm. On one of these visits he met Villiers de l'Isle-Adam again. He had felt a strong desire to get to know Villiers. It was "une obsession dont je me sens exalté, qui même, un peu, m'asservit." (p.18) He gives an interesting account of Villiers' idiosyncracies in Le Banquet. Villiers, whose full name was le Comte Mathias-Philippe-Auguste de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, was incapable of any lucrative work although his family devise was "La main à l'œuvre". He was coquettish about his appearance, a dual personality, "un fanatique rêveur" and "un railleur, qui protège son grand frère idéaliste contre les attaques et les profanations de la réalité." (p.39) Guiches tells of the occasion when Villiers heard that the throne of Greece was vacant and that France was the principal elector for a new King. Villiers dressed up, went to the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, obtained an audience with the minister and asked for support for his candidature as a Knight of Malta.



Guiches obtained Villiers' permission to rummage through his papers to enable him to write more accurately about him. Among them were stories, bizarre adventures, anecdotes, poems and statements of his faith, some of which he quotes in Le Banquet. (pp.44-51)

At Villiers' house Guiches met a number of artists and writers including Stephane Mallarmé and Georges Rodenbach. Villiers, however, despite his fascination for Guiches, was not a kindred spirit nor of any use to him in his career.

Il n'a ni mes idées, ni mes goûts, ni ma passion de vivre, en qui je vois le génie se débattre plutôt que battre ses ailes et de qui, sciemment ou inconsciemment, imiter l'art si rigoureusement personnel, serait pour moi, une sottise ou une infirmité! Cet homme ne sera jamais mon ami, car la fréquentation ne crée en lui que l'habitude, mais jamais l'amitié. (p.57)

Meantime Guiches took the manuscript of a new novel, La Bête, to Adrien Hébrard who had promised to publish one of his novels in his newspaper Le Temps. Hébrard was dismayed to hear that its subject was phylloxera,<sup>5</sup> the pest which attacked vines with disastrous effect. Guiches explained that this pest symbolised "un dévorant des consciences, et que mon roman est la tragédie qu'a déchaînée la Bête sur les traditions, les mœurs, l'âme entière d'une région dans laquelle, avec une rapidité affolante, elle substitue à la richesse qui maintient le moral, la misère qui le courbe et le tue." (p.31)

Hébrard was immediately interested. There was difficulty, however, about the title La Bête. Cherbuliez had just finished a novel of the same name which had appeared in the Revue des Deux Mondes. Hébrard suggested that Guiches should visit Cherbuliez to ask him if he objected to Guiches using the same title. Cherbuliez was indignant at the idea and Guiches had to choose a new title, L'Ennemi.



The novel was published in the Librairie Moderne in 1887 and was well received by the critics.<sup>6</sup> Huysmans wrote to him praising it:

C'est un beau livre de pas à pas, écrit d'observations accumulées, de seuils d'âme, par conséquent un livre qui bourdonne dans le crâne quand on le ferme. Mais, ce qui sort de plus clair, de plus net de tout cela, c'est une bonne et belle série de trouvailles d'artiste. Je suis vraiment très content et très requis par le style fermement pioché et pavé de térébrantes expressions qui vous fripent la mœlle! (p.121)

Of the characters, Huysmans wrote: "C'est la célébration artiste de la mitoyenne imbécilité et de l'ordinaire ordure d'âme des personnages. (p.122) Its style and its pessimism appealed to Huysmans, but these characteristics which were part of the Goncourts' stock-in-trade were a short-lived fashion of the period and soon afterwards became tiresome and too obviously "artistic" to enjoy lasting acceptance. The novel's theme of human degradation appealed also to Léon Bloy, who wrote to Guiches praising the noteworthy style and remarking on the veracity of his unmasking of human souls. "C'est l'idée profonde de votre livre d'avoir donné les consciences à dévorer à la bête. La pauvreté a ceci de commun avec les paniques qu'elle fait sortir des âmes, qu'elle les fait apparaître enfin démasquées, telles qu'elles sont." (p.125) He proclaimed the novel completely free from the literary influences visible in Céleste Prud'homme. Both Huysmans and Bloy commented on Guiches' portrayal of the role of money. Huysmans: "Un vrai son d'argent ignoble sonne là-dedans comme un glas." (p.122) And Bloy: "Vous avez, à ravir, la compréhension du rôle de la monnaie dans ce joli monde." (p.126)

Guiches had been to visit Bloy in his poor apartment with its dirty floors, walls and windows in 1882. Now, in 1887, Bloy had not changed. His rooms were still poor and dirty. He was still embittered about his lack of success. "Toujours le sourcil tempétueux sur les yeux noyés d'extase attendrie, sombres ou fulminants. Toujours la tête baissée sous le coup de poing perpétuel que le ciel assène sur sa nuque. (p.59) During their discussions about Barbey d'Aurevilly, Rollinat and Charles Buet, they talked also about Céleste Prudhomat, about which Bloy told him: "Ce n'est pas absolument méprisable... Seulement vous êtes encore asservi à Flaubert, de qui vous ne vous affranchirez qu'au prix d'efforts considérables." (p.60)

Bloy's Désespère, (1886) had just been published and Bloy was full of virulent bitterness at the critics who had completely ignored it. However, to Guiches' surprise, Bloy remarked "Heureusement que j'ai Huysmans." (p.62) Guiches wondered what Bloy, "ce périgourdien embrasé" and Huysmans "ce naturaliste hollandais et glacial" could have in common. Bloy called Huysmans "le plus prodigieux artiste que possède notre Ecriture," (p.63) and said that Guiches should meet him, as Huysmans would also like to meet Guiches. Guiches was unenthusiastic. "Je n'ai aucune sympathie envers Huysmans." (p.66) Nonetheless they met in a café and in spite of Guiches' antipathy they became friends. He gives a portrait of Huysmans in Le Banquet. He was struck, on meeting him, by "le saisissant et bizarre combat que le scepticisme, le diabolisme et le réalisme se livrent sur ses traits." (p.70) Huysmans talked about his indifference to Hugo's poetry but Les

Misérables was "tout ce qu'il y a de plus beau." Musset was "un rinceur de cuvette", Lamartine "une infusion de fleur d'oranger qui ferait mal au coeur." "Zola est un grand bon-homme, mais qui, maintenant, s'attarde dans les latrines et n'en sort que pour broser des décors d'Opéra." Guiches writes: "Goncourt est le seul qu'il aime sans réserve". (p.72)

Huysmans invited Bloy, Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Guiches to his house the following Sunday. Guiches was still totally unimpressed by any desire to know Huysmans. "Cet homme-là est un véritable criminel", he told Bloy. "C'est plus qu'un empoisonneur! C'est le décourageur! Je ne veux plus le voir!" (p.76) Guiches could not ignore the importance of Huysmans, however, nor the fascination of the man. And so he accepted Huysmans' invitation. Again in Le Banquet we find a description of the occasion. Huysmans had put a notice outside his door - "Je n'y suis pas" to discourage other visitors, but rather disconcerting for the invited guests too. The dining-room was small and dark, the study light and decorated with paintings by Pissarro, Cézanne, Degas, Forain, Albert Dürer and Breugel. Guiches comments: "Je sais déjà que tout concourt ici à servir la triple passion du maître de ce logis, la propreté, l'ordre et l'intimité!" (p.92)

Guiches discovered part of the reason for Huysmans' pessimism. His mistress was a sick woman, suffering from mental disturbance which Huysmans did not explain even to his friends. The result was a denial of Huysmans' hopes for a happy home life. He remained faithful to her although she was not his wife. From this, however, came his hatred of

women and his cynicism about love and marriage. Without the happy home he had hoped for, his literary ambitions also suffered. He related this good-humouredly, but Guiches says, "il souffre abominablement, furieusement de sa servitude administrative, de sa pitoyable solitude, du grotesque désarroi de son logis. Il souffre dans son cœur, dans son orgueil, dans le sentiment de son talent humilié par ce destin qui lui impose l'esclavage du fonctionariat!..." (p.92)

Guiches was inspired by Huysmans to revise his new novel L'Ennemi from start to finish. "Des aspects m'apparaissent qui m'étaient jusqu'à présent masqués. Je comprends, de mieux en mieux le 'rendement' des mots, comment des faubourgs et des banlieues naissent autour d'un adjectif et comment un verbe ou même un simple adverbe savent s'horizonner. Et c'est pourquoi d'un bout à l'autre, je récris L'Ennemi." (p.92) It was as a result of these efforts that Huysmans found so much to praise in Guiches' style. We shall see from a study of the manuscript what Guiches' native qualities had achieved before he decided to revise it. He saw a good deal of Huysmans, who lived in the rue de Sèvres and worked as "sous-chef de bureau à la sûreté générale du Ministère de l'Intérieur" where Guiches had worked in 1878 while studying Law. After Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's departure from Paris in 1889, Guiches and Huysmans drew closer together. They saw each other two or three times a week. Guiches met him regularly at the ministry in the afternoon when Huysmans was due to finish work. Huysmans enjoyed Guiches' own stories of "ces avatars administratifs" when he was at the Ministère. And Guiches was amused by Huysmans' accounts of scandal behind the scenes. "Les vices,

les trahisons et les clandestines bamboches sont révélées pas les rapports qui passent sous ses yeux." (p.105) Material here for a novel Guiches was to write in 1921, La Tueuse, about the intrigues and scandals of political life.

At this time Huysmans was disillusioned with Zola's circle<sup>7</sup> and relations were strained between him and Léon Bloy. Huysmans did not approve of the idle life led by Bloy, who had no wish to earn his living but was content to beg and live in near squalor. Huysmans and Guiches would dine together regularly, on the Boulevard St. Germain if they were feeling well-off, or in the Place St-Sulpice "les soirs moins fortunés". Guiches listened to Huysmans' resolving not to dine at Zola's house again, talking of his disillusionment with naturalism and of his search for a new direction. He told Guiches:

Je n'en veux plus de cette porcherie de naturalisme! Alors quoi? Qu'y a-t-il? Peut-être l'occultisme. Pas le spiritisme! La filouterie de simulateurs! La pitrerie des médecins, et le gagatisme des vieilles dames qui font les tables. Non, l'occultisme! Pas l'au-dessus mais l'au-dessous ou l'à-côté, ou l'au-delà de la réalité! A défaut de cette foi des primitifs et des premiers communiantes que je voudrais avoir, il y a là un mystère qui me "requiert" et j'y pense. J'en suis même hanté... (p.111)

Huysmans was interested in Guiches' forthcoming novel. "Ce sera très bien, votre ENNEMI. Vous avez le flair de l'exception, du coin nouveau, l'écriture artiste, et, surtout, le sens de l'ignominie foncière chez les honnêtes gens. Vous pouvez être tranquille. Vous nous avez avec vous les quelques-uns que nous sommes et que vous connaissez!" (p.112) Guiches was encouraged by this but knew not to be too confident as Huysmans would have been less charitable.

The friendship of Huysmans also brought Guiches at that time, 1887, into contact with Paul Verlaine. He, in fact, accompanied Huysmans to Verlaine's house on an errand of mercy, since Verlaine was practically destitute and in very poor health. Léon Bloy turned up at Huysmans' house and accompanied them. Guiches gives a vivid impression of the house and the man in Le Banquet: "On y voit et on y respire le farouche désordre du vagabondage et les plus écœurants relents de la prostitution." And: "Je suis devant un vieil ange déchu, devant le poète foudroyé, devant le génie qui a voulu monter jusqu'au sommet de l'arbre de la science pour y cueillir le fruit défendu, et qui a été jeté à terre par le Grand Terrasseur de l'Orgueil, condamné à porter désormais, au fond de son âme, la Beauté, et sur son corps la Laideur." (pp.116-117)

For a long time Guiches had been spending an hour or two nearly every day at the offices of Le Figaro. Thanks to Paul Bonnetain he was collaborating on Le Figaro Littéraire. In 1889 Guiches told Francis Magnard, director of Le Figaro, of his ideas for a new novel.

Il s'agit d'un jeune homme qui se destine à la carrière des lettres. C'est un esprit volontaire et rectiligne qui nie l'intervention du destin dans les événements et affirme que l'on peut conduire sa vie exactement comme l'on veut là où l'on est... Or naturellement le destin intervient, et, déjoue, l'un après l'autre, chacun de ses calculs... (p.144)

Magnard gave Guiches permission to go ahead with his novel provided that the irony which was obviously basic to the story should remain implicit and never explicit, since Magnard declared, "Le public ne comprend pas l'ironie. Il la prend pour une injure et il en a horreur." (p.145)

At the same time, 1888, Guiches was also commissioned by Le Figaro to write a series of articles on women writers, one of whom was Madame Alphonse Daudet, and another, Gyp. Magnard read the first few pages of Guiches' new novel and accepted it. To write it, Guiches worked in the apartment of Gustave de Malherbe overlooking the rooftops of Paris and with a view of the Opéra and the Sacré Cœur; a view which he describes in his novel: "Je suis aux prises avec mon héros qui, lui-même, engage avec la réalité un incessant combat." (p.158)

Guiches and Huysmans dined together frequently in 1889 at the Paris Exhibition. He describes in Le Banquet the colourful scene which excited him and also excited Huysmans, although the latter's impression of the colours was different - "ces teintes d'eczéma. Ces violâtreries d'ulcères! Ces marbrures de décomposition!" (p.162) The difference between their attitudes and personalities was clear. Huysmans' moods left an unpleasant impression on Guiches.

Guiches was distressed by the death, in 1889, of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam who had been ill for some time, Guiches, Malherbe, and Huysmans together had organised a marriage between Villiers and his mistress, for the sake of their son, in Villiers' room at the monastery of les Frères Saint-Jean-de-Dieu. After Villiers' death<sup>8</sup> Guiches and Malherbe decided to get away from Paris and spent a holiday in the Pyrenees. Here Guiches was horrified by the bull-fights and not too fond of the sea, referring to "la stupidité gigantesque et mal-faisante de ses colères." (p.173) What did appeal to him was the villa where René Goudinet kept a stable full of animals which would be allowed to die of old age so that man would discover their natural life span.



On his return to Paris Huysmans invited him to go with him to see Goncourt. The Académie Goncourt has already been planned and some of its designated members like Banville, Louis Venillot and Paul de St Victor had died. Present favourites, according to Guiches, were Daudet, Zola, Huysmans, and Mirbeau. According to Huysmans, as reported by Guiches, no one dare leave Goncourt's salon early as their work would be torn to shreds by the others. "Alors pour éviter d'être mangé, on tient bon et on reste." (p.181) Guiches was excited at meeting Goncourt who greeted him as "l'auteur de l'Ennemi" and questioned him about phylloxera, wanting a minute description of it. But Goncourt disappointed him in that he lacked the strength of a leader. "Il est bien trop lymphatique de corps, d'âme et d'esprit et il laisse choir sa parole nonchalamment, comme il livre sa physionomie, à l'observateur avec le plus insolent dédain de toute observation." (p.185)

Other visitors to Goncourt on this occasion included Bonnetain, Ajalbert, Rosny, Descaves, Henriques, Rodenbach, Paul Hervieu, and Alphonse Daudet. His visitors tried to please him with offerings of authentic accounts of unusual events, "Comme on sait que le plus agréable encens pour Goncourt est l'odeur spéciale que dégage un document fortement faisandé, chacun déballe et offre celui qu'il apporte en hommage." (p.191) Goncourt seemed aloof and bored by it.

Alphonse Daudet made a greater impression on Guiches. "Il entre du soleil, et celui qui dégage cette rayonnante chaleur vitale est un petit homme incapable, si un bras ne



le secourt, de se tenir debout." (p.198) It was Daudet, Guiches tells us, who brought the meeting to life.

On the occasion of the first stage performance of Goncourt's Germinie Lacerteux in 1888, Guiches, together with Alphonse Daudet, Léon Daudet, Zola, Clemenceau, Rodin, Hennique, Céard, Alexis, Rosny, Bonnetain, Margueritte, Descaves, Hervieu, Abel Hermant and others, saw the battle between the hostile groups, which, with Réjane in the title role, culminated in the triumph of Goncourt - "un personnage qu'il faut admirer sans réserve". (p.211)

The interest of the celebrations which took place after the performance lies, for us, in the fact that all five signatories of the Manifeste des Cinq came face to face with Zola for the first time since its appearance. Guiches expected "que nous écopons!" (p.216) In fact, he reports that Zola was charming to each of them and took an interest in what they were doing. Guiches was obviously already contrite about his part in the affair and says in Le Banquet that Zola "en feignant d'ignorer le dictamen, le condamne au néant, c'est-à-dire le réduit à ses vraies proportions..." (p.217)

In 1888 Guiches was invited to Daudet's house to his Thursday evening salon in the rue Bellachasse, and it was there that he met Clemenceau. "Je le regarde, effaré. Tant de lutttes, tant de plongées, tant de remontées tant de haines, tant de colères, tant de rancœurs, tant de frénésies, d'ambitions, de gloire, de vengeance, s'accumulent dans cette poitrine, qui encore plastronne!..." (p.227) More material here for La Tueuse, a study of political struggle and intrigue which Guiches wrote in 1921. He was fascinated by the power of the orator alternating with his other skills,

subtle and deceptive. "Est-il jamais sincère?... Tour à tour, il est l'orateur éloquent et classique... un gentil-homme, un commandant, un praticien bourru... un révolutionnaire... un vieux parisien..." Guiches sees Clemenceau's conversion to literature as a temporary stratagem - "l'égorgeur de gouvernements remontera froidement à la tribune, son couteau à la main." (p.227)

Although Guiches found it impossible to like Goncourt very much, he took to Daudet and found the occasions at Daudet's house a true delight. He found "générosité d'esprit" in his anecdotes and wrote an article for Le Figaro on Daudet's 'venue' in the theatre, with his play l'Obstacle. By contrast, Goncourt was obsessed with his own role and Guiches, who dined alone with him at Daudet's when the latter had to go off to the theatre, describes him as "le glorieux maître de qui je n'aime pas l'inconscient "égotisme" mais de qui je révère si dévotement l'Art." (p.239)

Goncourt did, however, write to Guiches on the occasion of the publication of L'Imprévu in Le Figaro in 1890, that he found the novel to be "une étude très 'nature' de la vie commune dans la réserve et la froideur de l'amant, amenant la brutalité de la fin... de la belle, de la bonne, de l'aiguillée psychologie dans une excellente langue littéraire." (p.239) And so Guiches, who had played the role of indulgent devotee on that occasion, at last had his reward.

In 1889, at the age of twenty eight, Guiches had been in Paris seven years and had had to struggle, as had his friends, for recognition in the world of letters. He had

also married and had a daughter. He had married Jeanne Dumay in 1882. Her father was the owner of a fashionable men's outfitters near the Opéra and Jeanne helped in the shop. Their daughter, Marguerite, was born on July 14th, 1883.<sup>9</sup> As he was feeling rather depressed he decided to go back home to Albas. After being engrossed in his life in Paris he found his energies restored and invigorated by his native countryside.

His attitude to his parents was one of pleasure at a joyful reunion, but he was very conscious that they were to blame for the separation:

Je sens qu'ils se reprochent ces sept ans de vie dure imposée, en croyant bien faire, à leur fils. Je sens qu'ils s'avouent coupables de le revoir sous cette apparence de fatigue et d'affaiblissement. De ma part l'étreinte est faite de toute mon allégresse à les excuser... (p.245)

Undoubtedly his continued sensitiveness on this score left a deep impression on him. It left its mark on Un Cœur Discret, a novel published in 1892 about a father and son separated by a wide gap of age and sympathy. But after the death of his father in 1894, Guiches did not return to this subject again.

Before returning home to Quercy, Guiches had seen the change in Huysmans brought about by the worsening illness of his mistress, Anna Meunier, who had to be taken to a mental hospital. The horror of her suffering and his grief made Huysmans reject Naturalism and seek an ideal to take its place. The church, with its pride and its preoccupation with outward pomp and monetary gain, still repelled him, however much he longed to believe in the goodness of an Almighty God and the miracle of prayer. Meantime, he had resolved to study occultism and had asked Guiches to write to a priest

who could introduce him to the Satanist, Jean-Baptiste Boullan, of Lyons. While Guiches was in Quercy, Huysmans went to see Boullan and returned to Paris, according to Guiches, frightened but well pleased and well documented for his novel Là-Bas (1891).

Guiches was also involved in a strange sequel to Huysmans' visit. Boullan died soon afterwards and some suggested the hoodoo magic of his enemies was responsible. A probably innocent remark by Huysmans on the subject of hoodoo involved him in a challenge to a duel by one of those being accused. The confrontation was avoided by an agreement between Guiches, representing Huysmans, and Maurice Barrès representing Stanislas de Guaita. Barrès was admired as a writer by Guiches but he disliked his ostentatiousness and his egotism.

Huysmans' longing for the soothing balm of prayer and the peace of a holy life may well have combined with the impact of the intense mental suffering of Anna Meunier to guide Guiches' thoughts in the conception of his next novel Philippe Destal. This is an account of the impact of sexual passion on a mind and body formed by a life of extreme mystic and ascetic dedication. It also emphasises the hypocrisy and treachery of late nineteenth century society.

In 1892 Philippe Destal was published in serial form in Gil Blas. It was well received by the critics. Edmond de Goncourt wrote to him praising it - "Elle est vraiment très curieuse la conception mystico-satyrique de Philippe Destal et l'exposition de l'amour de P et d'A est très charmante. Vous avez trouvé des particularités d'un joli raffinement psychologique dans les insomnies du jeune mari et vous avez très bien peint le foudroiement d'une mort imprévue dans

un cœur qui aime." (p.276) François Coppée, Henri de Régnier, and J.H. Rosny also wrote letters of praise. After this, Guiches became a regular contributor to Gil-Blas.

Guiches was recognised by his fellow writers as a potential force in the world of letters. In 1894 Tristan Bernard in an omnibus remarked to Pawlowski, later editor of Le Figaro, "Vous avez vu ce monsieur qui vient de descendre? C'est Gustave Guiches, l'auteur de Céleste Prudhomat. Retenez son nom. C'est un très grand bonhomme."<sup>10</sup>

In 1894, at the age of thirty four, Guiches was awarded the Croix de la Légion d'Honneur, together with Catulle Mendès, Rollinat and Paul Margueritte. At the same time Gil-Blas made him literary director of a new daily paper Le Grand Journal. The new venture did not enjoy the confidence of writers, however, and Guiches had difficulty in procuring well-known names to contribute. (See Appendix C(x)) Nothing came of it due to lack of capital.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Le Banquet, Paris, Editions Spes, 1926, p.7.  
Future page references, following quotations in the text of Part I of this thesis, will refer to this work.
2. General Pierre Keller described him to me as "un causeur éblouissant, charmant, avec une grande distinction de sa personne et de sa pensée" See also M. Jean Pagès' description of his uncle in Appendix E(i).
3. The Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris has among its collection of Manuscripts a letter from Guiches congratulating Paul Hervieu on his election to the Académie Française, dated 16 February 1900. (catalogue no. 13969) and a collection of 29 letters from Maurice Donnay of the Académie Française to Guiches (catalogue no. 13041).  
The unique proof of Le Café Concert held by the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal contains two monochrome proofs and one colour proof of illustrations by J.L. Forain together with a description of the project by the publishers, Maison Quantin.
4. Descaves' novel, like Abel Hermant's Le Cavalier Miserey, 1887, and Paul Bonnetain's Le Nomme Perreux, 1888, was critical of the bad conditions in the Army. See A.A. Greaves, op.cit., p.168.
5. See Appendix E for references by Mademoiselle Marguerite Guiches and Monsieur Jean Pagès to the vines of Joseph Guiches and the effect of phylloxera.  
For details of the phylloxera pest see A.J. Winkler, General Viticulture, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962.
6. François Magnard, the director of Le Figaro, on meeting Guiches for the first time, asked him point-blank for his next novel for Le Figaro, Francisque Sarcey gave a number of lectures on L'Ennemi, and Edmond de Goncourt wrote to Guiches that it was "Un livre parfaitement construit contenant une étude très sérieuse du sujet et très humaine du vigneron." (From the biography of Gustave Guiches in L'Ennemi, La Renaissance du Livre, 1920.)

7. "Je n'irai plus dîner chez Zola. On s'y emm... trop! On n'y parle que de tirages et d'argent! Alexis s'y tient comme un Goujat! Et puis le bric-à-brac! Les Deux anges du quatorzième qui gardent les 'goguenots' et le papillon de gaz dans le cierge pascal!!!!..." Huysmans' remarks, quoted by Guiches in Le Banquet, p.110.
8. Huysmans wrote to Mallarmé, on 5 July, 1889, a letter in which he refers to Guiches having seen Doctor Robin about Villiers' illness. "Guiches a vu Robin - et nous savons hélas! de quel incurable et diabolique mal il est atteint." Joseph Bollery: Léon Bloy: Essai de biographie. 1947-54, Vol.II, p.317. See Appendix A(iii) for a letter from Villiers to Guiches.
9. See Appendix E(ii) for Mademoiselle Guiches' reminiscences about her parents: and Appendix A(iv) for letters from Guiches to his wife.
10. G. de Pawlowski - Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires. 9 May 1920, p.502.

## CHAPTER 6

Guiches turns to the theatre. 1897-1913

In the last few years of the century Guiches tells us he felt that the literary world had lost its impetus "Les jours embrasés du naturalisme se sont éteints. On se se bat plus. On travaille.... Zola, Goncourt, Daudet publient inlassablement des œuvres qui s'ajoutent à leurs bagages mais n'ajoutent plus rien à leur prestige désormais révolu... l'époque actuelle semble fatiguée d'avoir produit Zola et Zola lui-même n'en peut plus d'avoir été Zola." (p.298)

He saw new writers who had no enthusiasm for the traditional poverty and misery they were expected to live in. Guiches was not happy about Paris being host to writers and artists of all nations as a pleasure centre. He criticised contemporary society:

Société de mensonge et d'impuissance si incapable de faire quelque chose par elle-même qu'elle est l'esclave de tout ce qui se fait! Société dans laquelle l'art est une copie, le vice une réplique, l'amour un plagiat et qui pour nommer la dégradante folie d'imiter n'a su trouver qu'un mot étranger le snobisme! (p.311)

He felt a strong urge to pillory this society by writing for the theatre, following the example of other novelists who had done so before him like Daudet, Goncourt, Prévost, Lavedan, and Donnay. One evening, at Zola's, in the rue de Bruxelles, he asked Zola what he thought of the idea. Zola stormed indignantly "contre cette ridicule, cette funeste manie, quand on est romancier, de vouloir, à toute force, faire du théâtre, contre le théâtre lui-même." (p.313) At the same time, however, Zola was preparing to present



L'Assommoir on the stage, from which fact Guiches drew encouragement.

In Le Spectacle (1932) Guiches says that while still young:

"il s'était juré de ne travailler que pour le théâtre, mais que nous ignorons la plupart du temps ce qui se passe en nous que durant des mois, des années, parfois à notre insu, nous recueillons des impressions, des faits, des images, des observations révélatrices d'âmes... qui commandent à notre cerveau, à notre plume... et lui ordonnent alors qu'elle se croit sur le point d'écrire une pièce de théâtre, de commencer un roman.<sup>1</sup>

Guiches' Snob was performed at the Renaissance theatre in April 5 1897 and was an immediate success.

Between 1897 and 1913, Guiches wrote a number of plays including Le Nuage (1902), Chacun sa Vie (1907) in collaboration with P.B. Gueusi, Ghyslaine (1908), Lauzun (1909) which was a failure, and Vouloir (1913). He showed considerable gifts as a writer for the theatre. More than his novels, however, his plays were narrowly topical, related to the contemporary situation in a way which makes them no longer of general interest. Nonetheless, at the time, Guiches was a success, and many of the greatest actors and actresses, like Sorel and Féraudy, acted in them.

Undoubtedly, Guiches most important friend and ally in the theatre was Lucien Guitry. It was he who gave Guiches his first big chance as a dramatist when he undertook to perform Snob, whether or not Sarah Bernhardt accepted it for the Théâtre de la Renaissance. In the event Sarah Bernhardt did want the play and it began on 5 April, 1897 at her theatre, with Lucien Guitry in the main role and Jeanne Granier opposite him. The play was a success and was well received by the

critics. Unfortunately its run at the Renaissance was adversely affected by the panic effect of a fire at the Bazar de la Charité, which suddenly reduced attendances at the theatre after its thirtieth performance.

Guitry was a regular visitor at the Guiches' house, encouraging him and listening to him reading the scenes of his play. Together they discussed ideas in practical terms and from this close cooperation emerged an effective play and a close bond of friendship. Guiches was later to look back with nostalgia on these days of enthusiasm and youth. With Guitry he climbed to the roof of a large building in the rue Saint-Martin so that Guitry could talk to a zinc-roofer and try his hand at the work in preparation for the role of Coupeau in the dramatisation of Zola's L'Assommoir. After working with Guitry, Guiches found the administrator of the Comédie Française, Jules Claretie, very inaccessible and discouraging. Even after it was accepted, Guiches' next important play, Le Nuage, was delayed both by the fire at the Comédie Française in 1900 and the complications of the theatre schedule. In the meantime Ménage Moderne, which Guiches had written while waiting for Snob to be performed, had its first night at the Sarah Bernhardt theatre on March 24th 1901. This was a failure, due, Guiches believed, to an unsympathetic interpretation in too large a theatre. Le Nuage which was performed at the Comédie Française on 15 December 1901 suffered from the bad reception given to Paul Hervieu's L'Enigme with which it shared the billing. As compensation Guiches' play was awarded the Prix Toirac, given by the

Académie Française in 1902. There was no escaping the fact that the play was a failure however and Guiches was discouraged.

His greatest success, however, was yet to come. Chacun sa vie, performed at the Comédie Française on September 10 1907, was that success. This time Guiches had a collaborator, P.B. Gueusi, co-director of the Académie Nationale de Musique. Guiches, instead of working all the time at home in his study, which was what he liked best, found himself having, in the afternoons, to work with Gueusi at the Opéra. Unhappy at first with the idea of working in such a hive of industry, of singers and dancers preparing for their roles, Guiches eventually became attuned to it and their efforts were suitably rewarded. With Maurice de Féraudy in the main role the play was a great success and Guiches was overjoyed.

Féraudy repeated this success in Guiches' Vouloir, performed at the Comédie Française on 19 May, 1913. This time Guiches felt especially pleased that he had written the play without a collaborator. This was a welcome compensation for the failure of Lauzun, performed at the theatre of the Porte Saint-Martin on 16 April, 1909. This had been a disaster, due to disagreements between the actor Abel Tarride and the director Henri Hertz.<sup>2</sup>

The death of Jules Claretie on 23 December, 1913, rapidly followed by the outbreak of the First World War, put an end to Guiches' career as a dramatist. Guiches acknowledged in Le Spectacle that: "Jules Claretie a ouvert les portes de la Comédie-Française à tous ceux de ma génération qui débutèrent au Théâtre-Libre."

Guiches recognised that the French theatre of his generation had devoted itself almost exclusively to the dramas and comedies of social life. As René Dumesnil has remarked, Guiches' plays are a very precise reflection of the times in which they were written, a fact which, although having the disadvantage that they fell from favour as fashions changed, makes them of interest and value to historians. Vouloir and Chacun sa Vie went on being performed after the war, at the Comédie Française, who also broadcast the play on Radio Nice in 1936 on 3 August, the anniversary of Guiches' death.

During this pre-war period Guiches wrote for La Nouvelle Revue in which many of his plays appeared, Le Figaro, Le Gaulois, L'Echo de Paris, La Revue Indépendante, Paris Illustré and others.

Jules Renard, in his Journal, comments unfavourably on Snob although the play was a success: "Fait compliment à Guiches de Snob après en avoir parlé avec dédain à Granier. Pourquoi? Raconté pour la cinquantième fois le succès du plaisir de rompre, en exagérant une fois de plus."<sup>3</sup> Generally, however, the critics were favourable. Edmond Sée wrote, "Qu'il s'agisse d'un article, d'une nouvelle, d'une comédie ou d'un roman, l'écrivain auquel nous devons Céleste Prudhomat témoigne invinciblement de la délicatesse, de la distinction, souvent de la hardiesse de son esprit. Oui, Gustave Guiches ne peut pas ne pas se montrer un homme de lettres, un artiste..."<sup>4</sup>

In his novels after L'Ennemi he had turned increasingly to psychological studies of Parisian life and gradually away from his portrait of provincial life. L'Imprévu (1890), Un Cœur Discret (1892) and Philippe Destal (1892) were all psychological studies of characters under pressure from the

driving forces of modern society, greed and ambition. Au Fil de la Vie (1895) is a collection of short stories, studies in human behaviour, the injustices and absurdities of public attitudes and the illogicality of domestic behaviour between man and wife. La Femme du Voisin (1898) was another collection of short stories on the theme of marital infidelity. Un Monsieur très bien (1910) is a study of romantic involvement and marital failure among members of the modern pleasure-seeking society of Paris.

Guiches' personality remained unchanged by his success. He enjoyed entertaining his friends and did so in some style when he returned to relax in Quercy at the château de La Grézette, near Mercuès.<sup>5</sup>

In 1913, on December 1st, Céleste, his stage adaptation of his novel Céleste Prudhomat, was performed at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, with music composed by Emile Trépard. This was to be not only his last success before the outbreak of the first World War, but also the end of an era for him, as for many others.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. Le Spectacle, supra, p.17.
2. Maurice Donnay, of the Académie Française, in a speech on the occasion of Guiches becoming an Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, on 15 March, 1929, blamed the director for the brief success of Lauzun. "Tu m'as raconté l'histoire de Lauzun. Elle est lamentable, non pas pour Lauzun, ni pour toi, mais pour le directeur, que je ne nommerai pas, qui est mort et qui t'avait monté la pièce sans te prévenir que par suite de traités formels, d'engagements antérieurs, ta pièce n'aurait que trente représentations! Ah! Combien cet homme était distrait! Les temps étaient changés: c'étaient les mœurs nouvelles, commencement de siècle à quoi par ta délicatesse, par un dédain distingué, tu t'adaptais difficilement." (Le Figaro 30 March 1929)
3. Journal de Jules Renard, 1927. F. Bernouard. Entry for 13 April, 1897, p.489.
4. Quoted by Pierre Keller, op.cit., p.272.
5. Le Spectacle, p.212.

## CHAPTER 7

### War years and after 1914-1935

As he relates in his diary of the war years, published in 1924 under the title En Vacances, Guiches went to Camy in Quercy in July 1914 for a holiday. Guiches' love for his native Quercy, far from diminishing over the years, had grown in strength. His parents' house in Albas had been sold and now a school stood where it had been. He had adopted Camy, between Albas and Luzech, as his second home and it was there that he returned whenever he was able during his years of success. From there across the valley he could see Albas: "Je vois ses maisons alignées au ras de la falaise surplombant la rivière. Il me semble que les êtres simples et les figures aimées d'autrefois se sont mises aux fenêtres. Mon clocher, lui aussi, se haussa par-dessus le coteau comme un porte-parole..."<sup>1</sup>

He describes how news of the war came to Camy:

Une cloche sonne là-bas vers Luzech. Ses premiers coups sont tombés dans l'air comme des gouttes sonores qui vont s'élargissant...<sup>2</sup>  
Du vallon de St. Vincent monte un carillon de détresse, une volée d'argent, cette volée blanche, angélique, sonnée aux enterrements d'enfants ou bien de jeunes filles. Le clocher d'Albas vient d'envoyer le glas de son bourdon, que secoue le hoquet tintant d'une cloche à voix frêle. Castelfranc remplit de sa lamentation les deux rives du Lot...<sup>2</sup>

In October 1914, Guiches returned to Paris. As he says in the closing lines of En Vacances he felt he could best play his part for his country in Paris:

Je veux participer aux peines, aux angoisses et aux rares bonheurs des êtres qui m'entourent. Si! je veux travailler, mais en prenant ma part des grandes émotions créées par le moment. Je veux communier avec elles, et, pour cela, il est absolument urgent de changer d'atmosphère.<sup>3</sup>

Back in Paris, Guiches observed the war-time scene. He made detailed notes in his diary about the stark realities of war that reached the capital from the front line - names and descriptions of real incidents - documentation, it appears, for future use. But Guiches never, in fact, used any of this in his published work.

This was not his only war-time work however. In 1917 he published Les Deux Soldats, the story of a writer who remained behind when another young man went off to fight in the war, who took the soldier's place on the land, and, as time went on, his place in a young woman's heart. There was a strong foundation of reality in this novel set in his beloved Quercy with his own personal experiences as the basis for its central theme.

After the war when Guiches settled down again in Paris, the world he had known, the public he had written for, everything had changed. The accurate portraits of a superficial society, with which he had fed the public in his novels and plays of pre-war days, were no longer relevant and no longer wanted. Even the accurate but movingly sentimental account of the war years on the land were totally lacking appeal to the public and Les Deux Soldats, although praised by the critics and awarded the Prix Née by the Académie Française, did not sell well. The mood of the day was for violent and brutal epics of the war and "D'un coup, tous ces écrivains fêtés, adulés dans ce qu'on a, par dérision, appelé la belle époque, semblaient dans l'oubli."<sup>4</sup>

As a result, Guiches' previous works, too, were now



neglected by the public. Les Deux Soldats was made into a film, but it was badly produced and was not a success.<sup>5</sup>

Financially leaner years were now beginning for Guiches. He continued to write, mostly minor novels, Le Tremplin (1919), L'Homme qui parle (1920), and Le Remplaçant and Le Petit Lancrit (1921), none of which was successful.

In 1921, however, he published a major novel La Tueuse, a sequel to Le Tremplin and a powerful story of a young man from the provinces who launches into politics and by force of ambition and ruthless tenacity of purpose becomes a powerful figure. Written with great skill and dramatic force La Tueuse was more successful. Louis Forest wrote to Guiches:

Hélas, nous en avons tant connu, nous en connaissons tant encore de Fraizal, et ailleurs que dans la politique... Le désolant c'est que cela recommence sous les yeux. Fraizal est le fruit même d'un peuple admirable dont le seul vrai tort est d'avoir un besoin maladif d'être roulé dans et par l'éloquence."<sup>6</sup>

In 1927 he was urged by his friends to present himself for election to the Académie Française. However, as his candidature was in competition with that of Abel Hermant, he withdrew his name to allow Hermant to be elected unopposed. Alphonse Daudet had once said of Guiches "Il fera une carrière dans la modestie."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps, had he been less modest, his career might have been different.

Guiches, who had been a chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur since July 1895, had the consolation of being made an 'officier' in February 1929. Two years earlier Raymond Poincaré had used his influence on Guiches' behalf, but had been unsuccessful.

He had begun work on his memoirs, and in 1925 published Au Banquet de la Vie to be followed in 1926 by Le Banquet and in 1932 by Le Spectacle. These remarkable records of his life and career are also documents of literary history since in them are also recorded details of important literary events and personalities.

Guiches did not forget about the Académie. A letter from Henri Lavedan to Guiches on 8 June, 1931, quoted by Henri Austruy, refers to a letter from Guiches to this effect. The occasion of the publication of Guiches' memoirs clearly drew attention to the significant part he had played as an observer and as a participant in the literary world of the last fifty years. Raphaël Duclos wrote to Guiches on 26 November 1930, after rereading Au Banquet de la Vie, "Ce livre seul devrait vous ouvrir toutes grandes les portes de l'Académie Française."

However, Guiches was not successful, and this, combined with ill-health, made him give up hope. In a letter to Henri Austruy he refers to Austruy's wish, expressed in his review of Le Spectacle in La Nouvelle Revue on 15 September 1932, that Guiches should be an Académicien and thanks him for his friendship, but points out that further efforts on his behalf would be useless: "Mais je connais les amis qui sont comme tous les amis "réunis en conseil". Ils admettent, volontiers, une suggestion. Ils ne supporteraient ni l'appel ni l'indication. C'est pourquoi je demande à votre amitié de ne pas ajouter un mot." Guiches had left it too late. He was not the man of the moment.

His last published novel, which came out in 1930, was La Vie Amoureuse de Murat, the story of his illustrious

compatriot of Quercy, a story which Henri Austruy believed would have made a good film. Guiches thought so too, but was unable to find the necessary support. (See Appendix A(ix))

But it did not bring Guiches the success he sought. The result was that he fell upon hard times. Instead of entertaining his friends in splendour at the Château de la Grézette, when he visited Quercy, he was now reduced to receiving them in a humble cottage in Camy, where plaster dropped from the ceiling into their food as they ate. Friends in Paris succeeded in having him appointed to the post of editor-in-chief of the Bulletin Municipal de la Ville de Paris. It was an office with the lightest of duties, simply that of passing for publication proofs which he did not even have to read. The appointment gave him pleasure. "Je suis l'auteur le plus lu de Paris."<sup>8</sup> he said.

Jean Ajalbert, in his Mémoires à Rebours 1935-1878, Vol.1, commenting on the injustice meted out to ageing writers says of Guiches:

Après de si brillants débuts, des succès répérés dans le roman et au théâtre, une carrière si nombreuse que son contemporain ami (et complice dans le Manifeste des Cinq), Lucien Descaves, retraçait justement dans une des pages littéraires du Journal. L'Auteur de Céleste Prudhomat, à 75 ans n'avait pas de quoi vivre - de quoi mourir. Des amis, finalement, lui avaient déniché un emploi: gérant du Bulletin de la Ville - où l'on n'a pas dû manquer de candidats. Avec quelle ironie ce causeur délicieux qui, à vingt ans, marquait sa place entre Forain et Lavedan, eût commenté ce destin comique et dérisoire.<sup>9</sup>

To this Clément Vautel replied in Paris-Soir that Guiches had not been abandoned, and that some writers had clubbed

together to help him and his family:

C'est ainsi que Gustave Guiches n'avait pas seulement des amis, qui, aux frais des contribuables, lui procurèrent un emploi, d'ailleurs bien chichement rétribué: il avait aussi des confrères, qui, sans le connaître pour la plupart, lui servaient, de leurs deniers, une rente viagère de 500 francs par mois, c'est-à-dire beaucoup plus que les émoluments du gérant du Bulletin Municipal. M. Ajalbert ne savait pas cela quand il a écrit son article. Il apprendra encore que les écrivains qui remplirent ainsi leur devoir de solidarité professionnelle à l'égard de Gustave Guiches continuent la même rente à la veuve et à la fille de celui-ci, bien que pareille 'suite' ne soit pas prévu par les statuts de leur association amicale. Mais pour les hommes de lettres la lettre passe après l'esprit.<sup>9</sup>

Pierre Keller assures us that Guiches was not embittered by his reduced circumstances and his loss of favour with the public but remained the interesting and warm-hearted raconteur he had always been, even if his guests now sometimes had to bring along their own food.

Guiches continued working until his death. His last projected novel, Pile, on which he was still working, remained unpublished owing to the delicate nature of its subject. Perhaps in an effort to capture the interest of the reading public he chose a theme which had some topical interest, that of homosexuality, based on the life of a well-known public figure. Since this personality, a journalist, was eminently recognisable, those to whom Guiches read the chapters of his novel he had already completed, advised against publishing such a controversial work.<sup>10</sup> Whether Guiches would have heeded this advice had he lived will never be known.

In 1932 Guiches said he was working on a fourth volume of memoirs in which he was recalling the political, literary,

artistic, scientific, even military and religious personalities he had known. This work never appeared and it is not known whether it ever got further than just an idea.

In August 1934, while staying in Quercy, Guiches was the victim of a car accident. His nephew, Jean Pagès was driving back from Cahors to Camy. The incident caused a stir in the local press and general indignation against the "assaillant". Guiches was not outwardly injured, but as his health was not good the aggravation of the event was probably a factor in his subsequent decline. At the time of the accident he was already working on what was to be his last novel, Pile. He was certainly apprehensive about car travel for a while. A month later he declined an invitation from Sophie and Marc Stambart, local authors, to visit the Château de Casals in Haut-Quercy by car. But Guiches was not a recluse. Apart from Jean Pagès and his wife he had visits from his neighbours who included Henriette Keller and the Morenos, aeroplane acrobats. In spite of the setback and the distractions, however, Guiches managed to continue working and promised that he would bring his completed novel back to Paris at the end of the holiday.

He had suffered ill-health for a number of years, but his illness reached a critical stage early in 1935. He had a sudden attack of fever whilst checking the last few pages of Pile. Surgery was urgent and on 15 April he went into hospital. The operation was a technical success but could not cure him. He returned home on 30 April knowing that he was dying. His agony lasted until August. He wanted to go to Camy, sure that the country air would cure him, but the journey would have been too much for him. He died at his home, 104, rue

d'Amsterdam, of cancer of the prostate gland, at 3 p.m. on 3 August, when most of his friends were away from Paris.<sup>11</sup> The completed manuscript and typescript of Pile were found in the apartment of Mademoiselle Guiches after her death, together with other documents.<sup>12</sup> An entry in Guiches' hand in the typescript of the novel is dated 10 April, 1935, five days before he went into hospital. It seems right to assume that he was still of a mind to proceed with publication, despite any misgivings he or anyone else may have had. Nevertheless, his death intervened and the novel has never been published.

At Guiches' funeral José Germain of the Société des Gens de Lettres referred to "la ridicule injustice des hommes" which had left Guiches' talent unrecognised and predicted that in the future his true worth would be acknowledged.<sup>13</sup> François Porché referred to him as perhaps the last of a dying species, "le laborieux nonchalant", who wrote to please himself and his art.<sup>14</sup>

Among some pages of thoughts and memories written down by Guiches after 1930 was a line which ran: "Je fais de la littérature pour vivre! Je n'en fais plus pour survivre..." François Porché's description of him as "le laborieux nonchalant" referred to the Guiches of the middle years. Guiches' own words apply to the later years when he was struggling to make ends meet. In these circumstances one might expect his work in the late 1920s and 1930s to consist of popular literature, attempts to appeal to a public whose requirements were difficult to determine, but for whom the cinema and the motor car were sure objects of interest. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Guiches' two novels Tout se Paye (1928), and La Part d'Amour (1930), centred around these two public idols.

Not surprising, either, to recognise that they are rather shallow and facile. After the carefully documented effort he put into La Tueuse (1921), which did not receive the reception it deserved nor was the financial success it deserved to be, Guiches undoubtedly came to the conclusion that he had to be more modern if he was to earn his living. Apart from his memoirs, therefore, his literary production was, regrettably, progressively inferior, born out of necessity.

In spite of this, to his friends he remained the same affable and charming host. He appeared as 'nonchalant' as ever. In personality he was unchanged. His sense of humour was unaffected. General Keller tells the story of Guiches, visited unexpectedly by young friends in swimming attire, apologising that he had not known they were coming and had not had time to undress.

Guiches' early years, as he tells us in his memoirs, were years of struggling to establish himself in the bitterly competitive world of letters. There was nothing "nonchalant" about the early Guiches. He fought hard for success and particularly to get work in journalism, which was vital if he was to survive. His confidence and his determination are both in evidence in his letters to his friend Maratuech and to newspaper editors, to whom he expressed his ideas for the future. Behind the eternal struggle to survive, Guiches' personal life underwent a series of changes. In his pursuit of success he led an active social life during the early part of his career in Paris. He wrote to the editor of the Revue Hebdomadaire (See Appendix A(v)) in 1892: "Je fréquente à peu près dans tous les salons littéraires parisiens, chez Daudet, Goncourt, Mmes. Adam, Gyp, etc. Je suis donc en mesure de



donner les informations les plus diverses, les plus curieuses et les plus sensation<sup>n</sup>nelles." But later Guiches went out very little, preferring to work in his room.

He was a close observer of the Paris scene in the Paris press for twenty years, leading up to 1914. But at the same time, he was a writer, who, as the years advanced, was content increasingly to observe from the quietness of his own home. Despite the innate friendliness of the man, his successes, and his great friendship for men like Lucien Guitry, he took his failures hard. He was disappointed when his efforts were not appreciated, so that when his youthful and exuberant ambitions were frustrated, he reverted to his innate modesty, and was often overlooked when credit and honours were being sought and won by others less deserving. Guiches' letter to Huret in 1891 spoke of the need of a writer to be independant of too restrictive schools of literature. This was how he saw things developing in the 1890s; a growing freedom for the individual writer. José Germain referred to Guiches' own independence in his funeral speech on Guiches' death. Guiches, he asserted, wrote as his fancy took him, ignoring those who reproached him for the many and varied aspects of his talent. His career led him through nearly all the different literary genres. The First World War, which marked the end of his career as a dramatist, marked also the occasion for publishing his first autobiographical work, En Vacances (1924). He also entered the field of biographer in his account of Murat's romantic career, La Vie Amoureuse de Murat (1930). His novels ranged from the regional and Naturalist Céleste Prudhomat (1886) and L'Ennemi (1887), to the biblical La Pudeur de Sodome (1888), the psychological traumas of Philippe Destal (1892), the political arena of La Tueuse (1921), and the fashionable demi-monde



sagas of Trop de Zèle (1898), Bonne Fortune (1905), Tout se Paye (1928) and La Part d'Amour (1930). His theatre moved from the fashionable society setting of Chacun Sa Vie (1907), to the historical theme of Lauzun (1909), and the character drama of Vouloir (1913). Only poetry was early and permanently abandoned by Guiches, who believed that the public were less generous towards poets and more interested in the novel and the theatre.

Guiches was never indifferent to details of personal appearance. He was always a careful observer of others, as his numerous pen-portraits of contemporary figures show. It is therefore not surprising that he was perhaps even a little vain about his own appearance. Reference has been made elsewhere to the beautiful coat he wore as a 'maître' receiving younger writers in his study. As a boy boarder at Les Petits Carmes in Cahors in 1876, at the age of 16, he had written to his mother asking if he might have a fashionable hat. He wanted one from Toulouse as those in Cahors were awful. "Le prix est de 15 francs. Ce n'est pas cher puisque nous les payons tous ainsi à Cahors. Papa ne peut pas me refuser cette fantaisie." He was equally vain about his appearance on the day he went into hospital shortly before his death. On that occasion he protested to his wife that his tie did not match his jacket. This attention to detail may be ascribed to simple vanity. On the other hand we may see in it the basic obsessions of Realism and Naturalism with visual effect. Again, it may be, quite simply, that Guiches knew the importance of external appearance as a key to the psychological interior, which was what fascinated him in those he described in the contemporary world and in his books. In reality or in fiction, Guiches was, throughout his life, intrigued by human behaviour.

## Notes to Chapter 7

1. En Vacances, Paris, J. Ferenczi et Fils, 1924.  
Entry for 'samedi, 25 juillet, 1914'.
2. Ibid. Entry for 'samedi, 1er août 1914'.
3. Ibid., p.178.
4. Pierre Keller, op.cit., pp.274-275.
5. The film adaptation of Les Deux Soldats was directed by Jean Hervé of the Comédie Française for the Agence Générale Cinématographique, with Maurice Escande of the Comédie Française in the leading role. See Appendix D(vii).
6. Letter from Louis Forrest, 1 November 1921.  
Quoted by Henri Austruy, op.cit., T143, p.246.  
For a description of Guiches in 1921 see the details of Guiches' passport in Appendix D(vi).
7. Quoted by Henri Austruy, op.cit., p.208.
8. Quoted to me by General Pierre Keller in a personal interview in Camy in 1972.
9. Jean Ajalbert, Mémoires à Rebours (1935-1878) Paris. Denoel et Steele, 1936, Vol.I, p.189.
10. M. Jean Pagès, Guiches' nephew, told me, in a personal interview in Paris in 1973, that his uncle had read part of this work to him, but that it was never published.
11. M. Jean Pagès' account of the last few weeks of Guiches' life is given by Henri Austruy in Gustave Guiches, Sa Vie, Ses Oeuvres, Ses Amitiés, Paris, La Nouvelle Revue, May-June 1936, 58<sup>e</sup> année, 4<sup>e</sup> Série, T.143, p.143.
12. These were presented by Madame Henri Bourboulon and Monsieur Jean Pagès to the Société des Etudes du Lot in 1977 and are now in the municipal archives of Cahors in Quercy.
13. Henri Austruy, op.cit., p.171.
14. Henri Austruy, op.cit., p.172.

PART II  
HIS WORKS

Guiches, Novelist of Quercy(i) Céleste Prud'homat (1886) and its setting

As a young man of twenty one, living at home with his parents and impatient to get away to Paris to live a life of his own, Guiches did not give much thought to the beauty of his native Quercy.<sup>1</sup> His ambition to write was an instinctive one, which he had felt from boyhood, and which had found expression in his early poems<sup>2</sup> and the diary he kept.<sup>3</sup> In these he showed notable powers of observation and a writer's interest in recording the activities of his family and friends, as well as his own experiences, but there is not much evidence here of an appreciation of Quercy.

Je m'ennuie(...) je sais que l'ennui est un aveu de paresse ou d'incapacité. Je l'ai combattu par le travail. Mais dix ans d'étude m'ont irrémisiblement brouillé avec l'agriculture(...) et je n'ai jamais pu me décider à foudroyer la cabriole d'un lapin ni à voir, avec joie, frétiller au bout d'un roseau, l'agonie d'un poisson (...) Je ne sais m'occuper inutilement d'un vignoble mangé aux vers par le phylloxéra. (Au Banquet de la Vie (1925), p.1)

He records in his memoirs how he did suddenly feel the beauty and attraction of his home and surroundings at the very moment when his passport to freedom had come, in the offer of employment in Paris. Only then does he consider with affection his own room, the garden of his home:

Je cours dans le jardin boire la dernière gorgée au ruisseau galopant devant les arbustes alignés qui donnent à son eau si fraîche le goût de leurs noisettes. Je me recueille quelques minutes près du puits, sous cette voûte de lauriers que mon grand-père appelait le temple de la gloire et j'embrasse le paulownia qui abrita si souvent mon sommeil à ses pieds, sur le gazon, parmi les sauterelles. (p.19)

All that he has disdained he now feels an incurable affection for:

Mon village blotti dans ce creux de vallon,  
les collines qui firent le gros dos à mon  
enfance pour qu'elle grimât dessus à  
quatre pattes, ces noires masures, au ras  
de cet escarpement, ébréchés comme les  
dents d'une mâchoire de vieille, ce Lot  
si accueillant, si calme et qui, tout à  
coup, mugit et bave parce qu'une digue  
l'empêche de passer. Rien n'échappe à mon  
regard, qui s'approvisionne en souvenirs. (p.8)

He fears he may find it hard to leave: "Le sol natal colle à mes pieds." (p.10) But he regards his hesitation as sentimentality<sup>4</sup>, to be resisted if he is to make a success of his life.

Guiches' hope that he would be inspired by "la rumeur de la ville, le coudolement de la rue, les serres chaudes des bureaux de rédaction, des salons des théâtres" (p.14) does not come to rapid fruition on his arrival in Paris. Restlessly enjoying the social amenities of Paris life, he spends many months searching in vain for a subject to write about. When at last he gains access to the world of writers, through the help of Charles Buet, he meets such people as Maurice Rollinat, who makes a deep impression on him as he recites his own poetry about his native Berry. Guiches remarks in his memoirs:

"C'est la terre natale, qui, avec lui, chante et s'éploie. C'est elle qui réclame son poète, son enfant prodigue et prodige... Il devient le pâtre au creux du vallon, le moissonneur de qui la faucille d'or rase la plaine ou le bouverier qui pousse, à l'horizon, ses boeufs dont les cornes allument des étoiles. J'en suis, moi aussi, d'une contrée où il y a de ces choses! Et c'est pourquoi, tandis qu'il chante, j'assiste, la mort dans l'âme, à sa "Mort des Fougères..." (pp.60-61)

When Rollinat, having taken Paris by storm, suddenly abandons everything and goes back to Berry, Guiches retains a special memory of him. "Ma mémoire cultivera son souvenir comme une double fleur, l'artificielle qui ne croît que dans

l'ombre et la vraie qui ne vit qu'au soleil..." (p.103)

Guiches could not but compare himself with Rollinat and wonder whether his real 'flower' required the sunshine of his native Quercy to thrive, but he could not return home, except in triumph, to resume the life he had so scorned.

Nevertheless the pointer was already becoming clear. It was natural that he should make Quercy the setting for his first novel, Céleste Prudhomat.

The subject of Céleste Prudhomat may have been suggested by a true event. Many years later, in 1930, a woman from Cahors wrote to Guiches:

Quelque temps avant sa mort M<sup>e</sup> P.C., notaire à C. eut l'amabilité de prêter à mon fils un de vos ouvrages, Céleste Prudhomat, qui nous ravit; et cela d'autant plus qu'il nous assura que votre héroïne avait été créée d'après la vie vécue de Noémie C., institutrice à F., près C., qui était une de mes cousines.<sup>5</sup>

Be that as it may, the critic Edmond Sée clearly saw the inspiration for the novel elsewhere at least in so far as literary model is concerned,<sup>6</sup> and Guiches' own notebook suggests that the character of Céleste was based on two young women he had known. (See Appendix C(xv))

Flaubert was, inevitably, an important influence on him and Guiches tells us so explicitly. Both were writing about their own region. Through the work of both novelists there runs a similar current of censorship of the behaviour and values of men and society and of the way some are manipulated and ill-used, just as others wield a power which is as founded on prejudice and incompetence as it is disastrous and unjust in its effect. To illustrate the plight of the victims of the system both chose a young woman emerging from the protected

life of a convent education and with ambition to rise above her humble station to live the romantic life she has read and dreamed about. Whereas Flaubert carefully and cynically paves the way for Emma's fondest hopes to be shattered by introducing us first to the nature of the man who is to be her 'Prince Charming', but who is the negation of what she takes him to be, and then to the early life and the explosively romantic nature of Emma herself, Guiches has no such hidden manoeuvring in mind. Guiches' story begins with the climax of Céleste's education, her public examination for her brevet d'institutrice to be accepted as a teacher, the culmination of her father's hopes, and the beginning of her life as an independent individual in the world.

The difference between the first chapters of these two books is indicative of the differences between their authors. The structure of the plot of Céleste Prudhomat does not depend on what Martin Turnell described, in an assessment of Flaubert, as the feats of "a great literary engineer."<sup>7</sup> It is the story, simply told, of a young schoolmistress in the town of Mazolles, which is in fact Albas, who hopes to marry her lover, a member of the local aristocracy. When he begins to cool towards her she hopes to compel him to do his duty as an honourable gentleman by deliberately becoming pregnant by another man. When he rejects her she kills herself. The story is told against the background of the countryside Guiches knew well. The girl, Céleste, may, as has been suggested, have been based on a living person. At all events, as the daughter of a café owner and hairdresser she is a local girl of humble origins and a product of a developing educational system. She

is a representative of a new better-educated generation struggling to find a foothold in a society divided into lower and upper classes, to neither of which she now belongs, herself rejecting the former and ultimately being rejected by the latter. In this she is not exclusively representative of Quercy.

Most of all, however, just as Erckmann-Chatrion wrote about Alsace, Daudet and Paul Arène about their native Provence, Barbey d'Aurevilly about the Cotentin peninsula and Flaubert and Maupassant about Normandy, so Guiches was writing about the people and life of his own Quercy. Céleste's examination in Cahors town hall is a part of a wider setting. In a way we are reminded inevitably of Flaubert's Catherine Leroux when Prudhomat's daughter hears her name called, but the similarity is only fleeting:

Une jeune fille, une pâle pensionnaire, se dressa sur son banc. Les yeux baissés, les mains inoccupées et flottantes, elle s'avança vers la table de l'examineur... La rugosité populaire, effacée par six années de frottement bourgeois, n'avait pas laissé la tache de son hâle sur le teint mat. Seul, le front était bien de la race, un front étroit et entêté. Les yeux noirs aussi, agrandis par l'effarement, exprimaient l'inquiétude, la souffrance d'une timidité combattue, une méfiance naturelle, une vague sentimentalité. Ils avaient le regard remontant qui s'essaie et quelquefois des lueurs vives, des fixités volontaires. La bouche, avec ses lèvres épaisses, était la bouche à baiser, rouge d'un sang fiévreux, de cette fièvre d'une jeunesse trop tôt éclatée, ainsi qu'une venue malsaine de chair et d'esprit.<sup>8</sup>

Guiches' heroine has a vitality and a rebellious determination which distinguish her from Flaubert's Emma Bovary. She is less the frustrated romantic than the ambitious, educated country girl embittered by boredom with the job to



which her education has led her and by jealousy and frustration at her failure to escape from it into the upper class, with which her education has brought her into contact. As he describes the scene in Cahors on that hot day in July, he refers to the other families who had come for the examinations and their young daughters: "vieillies dans leur adolescence par le précoce développement de la sagacité pédagogique."

(Céleste Prudhomat (1886) p.9) The portrait of Céleste's father is briefly drawn, but is part of the key to the story: "Mécontent de son existence, il avait en quelque sorte abdiqué en faveur de sa fille et désirait pour elle ce bel avenir qu'il avait passé si longtemps à désirer pour lui."

Céleste represented not only her own ambition but that of her father also. From him she inherited her pedantic way of talking which was to irritate Jacques Mauvalon. Guiches says of her father:

Même dans le patois, il avait des recherches de dialecte qui le rendaient peu compréhensible et pour ce fait lui conciliaient une respectueuse admiration. Il affectait les vêtements amples et depuis l'âge de quarante ans, il n'avait plus voulu porter que des redingotes longues et des raglans en hiver. Il paraissait ce qu'il eût souhaité d'être; il avait l'air riche, instruit et au-dessus du commun. (p.6)

Prudhomat and his family lived in Creysse: "Prudhomat était surtout épicier à Creysse, dans le Haut Quercy, une vieille bourgade cachée comme une nasse de pêcheur sur les bords chantants et verts de la Dordogne." (p.6)

He had wanted a son to whom he could give the education he himself had lacked. He had, therefore, been disappointed to have a daughter, but he had got the idea of making Céleste a schoolmistress from his conversation with the local schoolmaster: "C'était pour la famille une élévation dans l'ordre social et cette considération lui suffit pour imposer à

Céleste la vocation de l'enseignement." (p.6) His favourite saying, from first to last, even when faced in the end with his daughter's disgrace and her lifeless body, is "L'instruction, c'est tout."

Guiches' description of the scene in Cahors on the day of the examination is a Flaubertian tableau. Without being on the grand scale of the "Comices Agricoles" in Madame Bovary there is clearly an attempt on Guiches' part to create here a scene in which various elements, like themes in a symphony, occupy our attention in turn.

Prudhomat disguises his anxiety by drinking beer and reading L'Informateur du Lot at a café from which he can see his wife on the Town Hall balcony: "errant comme une âme en peine. Tout à coup il bourra sa pipe et l'ayant aux lèvres son visage exprima la satisfaction qu'il avait de cacher son inquiétude sous une apparence frivole." (p.6)

Céleste meanwhile is being questioned by the examiner: "...elle... partait dans une démonstration bredouillée, apprise par coeur, récitée d'un seul trait jusqu'à ce que, la respiration raccourcie, elle s'arrêtât avec un soupir de soulagement." Parents, whispering or dozing, were sitting on chairs behind her and the village schoolmaster approving, laughing, or gesticulating as they followed the proceedings. Above these sounds "la voix du juge dominait, parfois avec des sonorités vibrantes, parfois inclinant au murmure, comme si l'autorité de son érudition fléchissait sous l'accablement de la chaleur." (p.7)

Finally, the examination over, the crowds emerge from the Town Hall, Mme Prudhomat among them, crying out the news of

Céleste's success, to Prudhomat's great joy.

Guiches has not attempted to emulate the size of Flaubert's canvasses, but he makes use of the occasion to introduce his characters, from the Prudhomats and their like, to the daughters, victims of their parents' ambition; from the village schoolmasters, showing their knowledge, the examiners adopting a bored and impersonal remoteness, the soldiers leaving the barracks in the streets of the town and children coming out of school, to the drinkers at the Café de Bordeaux who are celebrating business deals or shop assistants lazing away the hot and oppressive hours of the day.

Guiches drew on his personal experience in setting his story. Creysse was his own father's native village in the valley of the Dordogne, and Prudhomat, as café proprietor, barber and grocer, reflects the nature of the place and, as time goes on, the difficulties which beset the village, as a result of the growth of the disease of phylloxera. This attacked the vine crops and brought ruin to the farmers and hence the tradespeople like Prudhomat himself. This disease already occupied some of Guiches' attention, in passing. He refers to Prudhomat having collaborated with the local schoolmaster in writing a brochure on vine-growing in which they discussed phylloxera. In L'Ennemi Guiches was to make this disease the 'villain' of his novel.

The setting for Céleste's examination, and for many more scenes in the novel, is Cahors. Just as one could follow the movements of Rastignac through the streets of Paris, so Guiches' descriptions of the streets and buildings of Cahors are accurate in their detail and in name. He refers to the Prudhomat family's celebration dinner at the Cheval-Blanc where Céleste first sees Jacques Mauvalon. "En plein quartier

des Badernes, dans une rue noire, étroite, semblable à une rigole profonde, où croupit une atmosphère moite, empuantie par les ruisseaux d'eau grasse et les relents de musc soufflés par des persiennes à demi closes..." (p.7)

Later in the novel Céleste, on a visit to Cahors, to be with Jacques Mauvalon, her lover, and, at the same time, exhibit some of her schoolwork in the Agricultural show, hurries angrily through the streets of the town after seeing Mauvalon with Germaine Mazurier. "Elle descendit les Fossés, se disant à voix basse des mots incohérents, gagna le quai Champollion et entra, comme si elle s'y réfugiait dans la maison de Mme Anna où les avait logés Baudrillet." (p.61)

From the window of this house she watches for Mauvalon and his officer friend Baudrillet, with whom she is subsequently unfaithful to Mauvalon, to arrive:

Devant elle, muré dans les talus à pic du quai le Lot roulait lourdement fendu par les piliers triangulaires du pont Notre-Dame....Les deux faubourgs Cabessut et Saint-Georges, comme pour se rejoindre, égrenaient sur la route le cordelet pimpant de leurs maisons uniformes à jardinets rectilignes... En face, le mont Saint-Cyr, le dos énorme, hérissant son maigre poil gris de bruyères, les vestiges noircis d'une abbaye déchiquetés à longs pans troués de longues entailles. (p.62)

Guiches introduces into his Agricultural Show, a scene of triumphal entry involving Cahors' most famous son, Léon Gambetta, based on a factual scene witnessed by Guiches in 1880 when Gambetta had gone back to Cahors to inaugurate a monument to the "gardes mobiles du Lot tombés à l'ennemi."<sup>9</sup> In Guiches' novel the crowd clamours for Gambetta, who is not, however, referred to by that name, to appear on the balcony of the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs:

On l'appelait "Léounn" tout court, "lou nostré drollé." On entourait des revendeuses qui rappelaient ses polissonneries de collégien et que des vieillards affirmèrent avoir calotté le gamin alors qu'il apportait de l'épicerie paternelle, les pains de sucre ou les assiettes qu'il cassait, déjà! (p.60)

Not only Cahors however is accurately described by Guiches. The area of Quercy covered by Céleste Prud'homat included not only Cahors and Creysse but also Guiches' native Albas, here thinly disguised under the name of Mazolles, and also the village of Ferrières, in the Causse, given the name of Marnières by Guiches.

The region of the Causse, through which the Prud'homats travel on their way home from Cahors after the examination, is described by Guiches as: "...la région convulsée du Quercy druidique, où les sépultures gauloises soulèvent en tertres espacés leurs coupoles de gazon." (p.12)

Marnières is where Céleste obtains her first teaching post. Already impatient to rise on the social scale, ambitious in her new profession, and having had to wait several months for her appointment, Céleste is depressed by the district: "...l'institutrice considérerait avec un regard attristé l'infini terne et crayeux du paysage, une succession de glaises rouges et bleues, de friches grisâtres, une désolation blafarde, une lande implantable, sans le mouvement clair d'une rivière ou la verdoyance d'un coteau." (p.15)

Like Emma Bovary before her, Céleste is bored and frustrated by her new position. Her lack of interest in her work and the bleak prospect before her are an omen of the way her hopes and ambitions are doomed to be thwarted. What had seemed a bright pathway to success, on the sunny July day of her

examination and the journey home to Creysse, had become a sombre and rebellious classroom:

Elle ne pouvait éternellement durer, cette claustration qui verrouillait sa jeunesse, cette existence qui la vouait pour des gages de domestique au défrichement de cerveaux plus inentamable que le Rocher de Sainte-Marie! Et ce désert qui l'environnait, cette étendue plate, carbonisée, rasée de végétation sur laquelle pesait, comme un brouillard de marécage, une inconsolable tristesse'. (p.20)

But it is when Céleste, having become Jacques Mauvalon's mistress, has obtained, by his influence and efforts, a transfer to a much sought-after post at Mazolles that Guiches describes with warmth and affection his own Albas:

Ce n'était plus l'étendue morne, la lande broussailleuse de Marnières. On eût dit une forteresse, un amas de murs gris sur piédestal en rocs vifs, falaise abrupte hérissée de fougères,... Au-dessous, à deux cents pieds, le Lot tend sa nappe, que creusent les batelets de sable... Mazolles couronne l'escarpement. L'église, émergeant des ruines, fortifiée de la légendaire tour du Soupardon, écrase de son clocher trapu, à la pointe duquel le coq évolue sur son perchoir vestigieux, le groupe sombre et vertigineux des toits. (p.42)

Albas, apart from the church which has since been rebuilt, is distinctly recognisable. (See Appendix D (viii)) It is not only the external features of the town and the surrounding country that Guiches gives us in his novel, however. Its inhabitants too are presented as a lively population, busily involved in the activities and rivalries of a thriving village:

La grand'route traverse la bourgade et de chaque côté de cette voie spacieuse deux fois par jour, ébranlée par la correspondance du chemin de fer, s'ouvrent les boutiques, des boucheries où les moutons écartelés saignent aux crochets des pendoirs, des épiceries en perpétuelle concurrence qui soufflent des puanteurs de morue... Puis ce sont les cafés, où le soir l'on braille des choeurs politiques accompagnés à grands coups de poing sur les tables.... (p. 42)

Céleste on her round of courtesy calls is surprised to find the mayor, Turlan, busy on a Sunday: "surveillant les travaux de ses tonneliers qui, le tablier de cuir autour des reins, cerclaient, flambaient et roulaient des barriques qu'ils entassaient sous le hangar" (p.43) She is surprised too when the mayor begins a virulent attack on the anti-republican opposition in the district, particularly the sisters of the convent school. Céleste's reaction is a mixture of bewilderment and amusement: "prête à rire des mots incompréhensibles, des locutions patoises qu'il francisait, tandis qu'il allait, grisé par ses paroles, grave dans sa barbe, sans inquiétude et sans hésitation."

This indication of the division of the town into two political factions fits the account of Albas politics given by General Pierre Keller: "Albas, comme tant d'autres villages de France, était déchiré par la politique. La musique elle-même n'arrivait pas à calmer les esprits. Il y avait l'Orphéon Républicain et l'Orphéon Monarchique."<sup>10</sup>

In Guiches' Mazolles it is not the rival musical societies which mark this antagonism between opposing factions but primarily the rival schools. Céleste, caught up in the feud, gradually loses a number of her pupils to the convent school, sees her position threatened by accusations of immoral behaviour by what the Inspecteur d'Académie called "le parti réactionnaire", and is finally dismissed when Turlan has to yield to demands for her expulsion. The rivalry between the children mirrors that of their parents:

Un autre groupe plus nombreux passa sur la place, se rendant chez les Soeurs. Les fillettes se croisèrent. L'institutrice



remarqua le regard par-dessus l'épaule  
qu'elles échangèrent et elle comprit  
l'antagonisme instinctif, irréconciliable  
qui séparait ces enfants. (p.88)

Most of Guiches' novel is set in Mazolles. It is there that Céleste arrives full of hope and joy in her love for Mauvalon and there too she dies by her own hand when all her hopes have crumbled.

The second backcloth to the story is Cahors, the setting for the most important events in Céleste's life, the crisis in her relationship with Mauvalon, when she makes a jealous and noisy scene at the theatre, her planned seduction by Baudrillet, who makes her pregnant and thereby brings on disaster, and the source of the medicament which Céleste uses to bring on her miscarriage and her death. It is in Cahors that both Baudrillet and Mauvalon make love to Céleste in the same afternoon, unbeknown to each other, and where Céleste, confident of the future, walks with Mauvalon alongside the Lot with its most famous landmark: "Devant eux, le pont Valentré gonflait son échine de pierre comme un énorme dos d'éléphant avec ses trois tours carrées à toit pointu." (p.69)

For Céleste, and for us, Marnières and subsequently Mazolles are the reality of her empty and difficult life into which her education has led her, but for which it has not prepared her. The schoolroom is a constant source of bitterness and frustration for her. She cannot control her pupils and is unwilling to devote herself to a life of self-sacrifice to them. The result is a deterioration in her relationship with her pupils and failure on their part to make progress. Her time at Mazolles is taken up by these problems, by the hostility of the local inhabitants who disapprove of her flirtations, dress



and manner, and by constant planning to get away to see her lover and escape from the reality her education had brought her.

Céleste is not an exclusive product of Quercy any more than Emma Bovary had to be born in Normandy. She is a country girl, the daughter of an ambitious father, who could, as Pierre Keller says, have been born anywhere: "On peut très bien imaginer le cas Céleste dans une autre province. Le terroir est extérieur. Il fournit le cadre, mais il le fournit bien."<sup>11</sup>

Céleste's ambition does not take her outside Guiches' native region, merely away from her family and the peaceful existence that might have been hers: "Elle n'avait que le regret vague d'une existence tranquille qu'elle eût pu avoir là-bas à Creysse, d'une existence normale tournant dans sa sphère paisible, tandis qu'elle se sentait désorientée comme un boulet perdu à travers un vide désolé." (p.76) Guiches, of course, knew what it was to leave the peaceful atmosphere of Albas for the vast and sometimes, no doubt, daunting face of Paris. Perhaps he himself felt disorientated at times.

(ii) Céleste Prud'homat and the Theme of Education in a Rural Community

In his memoirs<sup>12</sup> Guiches reports that his father's reaction to Céleste Prud'homat had been to see in it a powerful attack on Godless education and the punishment of foolish social ambition. Guiches claims that this was not his idea nor his intention. He called it a love story, implying that no educational or social philosophy had been in his mind. The novel, indeed, stands on its own merits as a love story, accurate in its psychology, convincing in its detail. Nevertheless, the theme of education is fundamental to the story of Céleste Prud'homat, insofar as she herself seems to represent the new era in which, according to its advocates, education was to ensure the material and cultural improvement of its charges. In this respect Guiches' novel appears as a harsh commentary on these idealistic hopes, since her destiny is one of disappointed ambition. Furthermore, Céleste's education makes her a lonely figure, ashamed of her origins, callous about the difficulties of her parents, obsessed only with her own aspirations. Not only that, but she herself has no interest in the children for whose education she is responsible. She cannot bear the children of her first school at Marnières, partly because of their unruly behaviour, but also because they are the children of the village people she scorns.

Not surprisingly perhaps, some critics did see in the book a criticism of government policy. Jules Ferry, Prime Minister until 1885, had introduced legislation making lay education free and compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 13 years. It was alleged by some that Guiches' novel

was written as a comment on the value of public education. Guiches always denied this, saying that he was simply inspired by the situation as he saw it.<sup>13</sup> There is no doubt that the contemporary interest in education is reflected in the novel. Prudhomat's frequently repeated article of faith, "L'instruction, c'est tout," is one indication of this, but not the only one. In the discussion between Prudhomat and the local schoolmaster, when celebrating Céleste's success in becoming a schoolmistress at the beginning of the story, we find a reference to the widespread growth of education and a cynical comment as to its value from Prudhomat's wife as she finishes a sentence begun by the schoolmaster: "C'est un bonheur que le goût de l'enseignement se propage, que le nombre des instituteurs augmente tous les jours. Si cela continue..." "Il y aura plus besoin d'outils pour travailler le bien..." finit la vieille dame." (p.9)

The principal vehicle by which betterment through education stands condemned, however, is Céleste herself. Only minutes after her examination success, when they are dining at their hotel, she feels ashamed of the vulgarity of her parents when a young man looks at her from a neighbouring table:

Elle considéra son père, sa mère,  
l'instituteur et une soudaine humiliation  
lui colora la figure d'une ardente rougeur.  
Sous la pesée de ce regard (...) elle  
éprouva le besoin d'établir sa supériorité  
d'éducation et, le savoir-vivre appris au  
couvent lui revenant à l'esprit, elle  
mangea d'après les principes, découpant  
les morceaux, les coudes collés à la  
taille, et l'index ostensiblement appuyé  
sur le revers du couteau. (p.10)

The hostility of the Roman Catholic Church to lay education

is also reflected in this novel. When Prudhomat announces proudly to the priest that his daughter has passed her teacher's examination, his response is cool: "Le prêtre fit une inclination glaciale et se couvrit." (p.12)

When her father takes her round the houses of friends and neighbours to tell them of her success, Céleste feels a strong distaste for these people among whom she is "une étrangère avec des goûts bourgeois" (p.12) and whose houses she finds poor and dingy, smelling of cabbage soup and rancid fat. She would enter on tiptoe, "raidie de tout l'empois pédagogique, les lèvres pincées, avec une expression de dégoût et d'ennui." (p.13)

Céleste also adopts a style of speaking which is intended to remind people of her superior education. She "répondait au patois dans un français châtié, accentué par une recherche énervante de prononciation." (p.13) It is this same accent which later irritates Mauvalon. It is an indication of the way her education not only separates her from her own people, but also fails to give her access to the society she envies.

Guiches' own education had been happy enough. He had failed, however, in his law studies, which his father had wanted him to follow instead of the literary career he himself longed for. He had perhaps, therefore, a not too respectful regard for the ambitions of the father, and this portrait of the disastrous consequences of the fulfilment of such an ambition may not be entirely unconnected with his own experience. On the other hand, his account is objectively given and recognizably true and undistorted. So far as is known he did not hold strong views on the education of girls in particular, so that his description of Céleste and her sister candidates was not dictated nor influenced by personal prejudice. It is

simply a reflection of a contemporary attitude, as viewed by a society which found it novel and perhaps a little unnatural: "(...) les jeunes filles marchaient soucieuses, empesées de pédantisme". (p.6)

Guiches' portrait of Prudhomat is not unsympathetic. He is a man who, apart from his paternal solicitude, is displeased with his own existence and wants something better for his daughter. Similarly, the local schoolmaster, Chassignon, is portrayed with robust freshness. Co-author of a pamphlet advocating action against the vine pest phylloxera, Chassignon has even greater faith in education than Prudhomat. To the latter he represents the Establishment, and when months go by and Céleste still has not received a teaching appointment, Chassignon begins to fear Prudhomat's wrath. Whenever the café proprietor appears to be on his way to the school, the schoolmaster hurriedly makes his escape into the countryside with his walking stick until nightfall. He grows a beard rather than face Prudhomat, who is also the village barber. The episode is swiftly settled in a whispered exchange during mass, when Chassignon in a moment of inspiration suggests that Prudhomat should get the help of the député.

As in Madame Bovary there are a number of well-drawn minor characters whose role is to provide a broad and effective canvas for the action of the novel. In fact in Guiches' novel the canvas is somewhat similar in breadth to that of its more illustrious counterpart, for the action is set in four different places. Guiches succeeds in distinguishing between Creysse, Marnières, and Mazolles where she ends her short career. Mazolles and Cahors occupy pride of place. Guiches

describes them with affection, their people with humour and wit. There is already something of the Parisian poking fun at the provincial, alongside his obvious sympathy for them in their troubles. Phylloxera, "la bête" as it is already referred to here, casts its shadow over the Prudhomat home, as it will subsequently over the Chavasseur home in L'Ennemi. The broken figures of the Prudhomats on the final page, for all their foolishness, are tragic and helpless victims of both natural and man-made disasters.

The irony of Prudhomat's final words "Madame, l'instruction c'est tout!" is that they are inspired by Céleste's letter of dismissal from the Prefect's office with its impressive prefectural insignia. If Prudhomat had had the benefit of the education he so extolled he would have been even more desperately unhappy at the knowledge of her professional disgrace. We are left with the unavoidable conclusion that it is better, at least sometimes, to remain in ignorance. Madame Prudhomat puts it more bluntly when she tells her daughter: "Il faut rester ce qu'on est, voilà tout." (p.118)

Céleste is punished by a wretched death for her ambition, for the ideas her education had given her of her own future prospects. An attractive young woman, she aspired to greater things than she was capable of: "Elle savait la valeur de son corps et elle s'exagérait celle de son esprit." (p.27) Germaine, her convent school friend, succeeds where Céleste has failed. She it is who rejects Mauvalon, not he her, and she goes happily back to the convent to become a nun because she wants to. Céleste envies her qualities because she herself lacks them: "Elle se sentait une rage implacable

contre son ancienne amie qui l'écrasait de tout son charme, de toute sa virginité florissante, de toute sa radieuse dignité." The contrast between the worldly, emancipated young woman and the traditional modest symbol of purity still has relevance in the second half of the twentieth century. The theme of education and of female emancipation make Céleste Prudhomat an interesting and credible novel even today. Moreover, the element of romanticism of which the nineteenth century had made so much and then subsequently neglected, finds a place here too. The disaster which befalls Céleste is the consequence of a combination of factors, not the least of which is her romantic obsession with a story-book marriage.

Guiches skilfully develops this theme of romantic dreaming by means of the café painter and his song:

Eh bien. Si l'amour est une souffrance

Donnez-m'en, Mignon, dussé-je en mourir.

Céleste is drawn to the itinerant painter in her hours of boredom in her first post at Marnières, and she hears the song again at Mazolles and then again in Cahors. The theme at first lures her with its prospects of romantic love and adventure. Then, when her affair with Mauvalon turns sour, it taunts her: "Pâle voyageur, connais-tu l'amour? Ce refrain qui l'avait fait tressaillir là-bas, dans les steppes de Marnières, et qui depuis, n'avait cessé de la poursuivre, implacable, comme le sanglot de toute sa vie! Elle frissonna." (p.72)

Just as Prudhomat's final expression of confidence in education ironically emphasises how misplaced it is against the background of both her death and her disgrace, so the

painter's song rings out once more in Céleste's ears as she lies dying, underlining the treacherous unreality of its message:

Si, pauvre mignon, tu connais l'amour,  
Fais-le-moi connaître en rêvant un jour.  
Selon moi, vois-tu, c'est l'indifférence  
Qui blesse le coeur et le fait souffrir. (p.122)

The pitfalls of romantic ambition combined with the illusion of excellence gained through education pave the way for Céleste's disastrous demise. She is outmanoeuvred by Mauvalon and by her enemies in Mazolles, not merely on account of her inferior social status, but because her aggressive ambition arouses hostility with which she is unqualified to deal. Success in society, Guiches seems to be saying, is not simply a matter of education and ambition, but is a game of politics and cunning which has to be learned and in which the higher echelons of society have inborn advantages.

One of the symbols of education, letter-writing, plays a not insignificant role in the novel. Both Céleste and Mauvalon make unscrupulous use of letters. He writes to her after their scandalous scene at the theatre in Cahors with an air of sincerity, urging her to return to Mazolles at once to allow the breach to heal. The note is, in fact, written callously and hastily in order to get rid of her and so avoid further scandal reaching the ears of the Mazurier family. Céleste reads into it, however, great depths of love and suffering and at once takes the train for Mazolles, trusting in his love for her. Later, when she receives a letter from her father asking for money, Céleste replies commiserating with them in their difficulties and informing them that she intends to spend her holiday in Mazolles to save them expense. In fact, she does not believe that her father needs the money.



She believes he is merely endeavouring to recover the money which he spent on her education. She is also anxious to conceal from them the fact that she is pregnant.

Letters, therefore, and, by implication, education, are used to deceive. Moreover Céleste uses Mauvalon's letters as a means of obtaining money from him after his marriage. This symbol of the end of all her romantic hopes is one more indication of the spurious value of learning.

Perhaps the most effective parable of the futility of Céleste's hopes is represented by the story of Sans-Besoin, the beggar woman who carries messages between Céleste and Jacques Mauvalon. Sans-Besoin is regarded with affection by Céleste until the day when she reveals that she was long ago seduced by Jacques' father and then turned off the estate because she refused to marry the farm-hand chosen for her. The son she bore hated her for what he was, left her and met a tragic death. Céleste turns Sans-Besoin out of her house for suggesting that Céleste would fare no better with the son than she had with the father. In fact, however, despite Céleste's superior education and social aspirations, the result is much the same.

(iii) The Vinegrowers of Quercy in *L'Ennemi* (1887)

The full title of Guiches' first novel, Céleste Prudhomat - Mœurs de Province, clearly indicated his purpose. Following the example of Balzac, he aimed to portray life in his native Quercy. Guiches' next novel L'Ennemi appeared a year later, in 1887. He had promised the critic Francisque Sarcey "Je vais continuer ma série de province" and Sarcey had indicated his approval: "C'est ça..."<sup>14</sup> This time the novel centres on the fictitious town of Marcayrac, which in reality was Luzech, a close neighbour of Albas on the road to Cahors and standing also on the river Lot. Luzech was well-known to Guiches, with its railway station from which he had set off to start his life in Paris and for its importance as a vine-growing centre.

A change of emphasis is clearly evident however in Guiches' second novel. Whereas in Céleste Prudhomat he gives us the story of a young woman's struggles to better herself and improve her social position, in L'Ennemi we are presented with the struggle of a community against a pest which not only destroys their livelihood, but also brings about an insidious disintegration of the morality of its people, in which those who toil on or live off the land, workers and owners alike, are deceived, ruined or destroyed, and the rich and unscrupulous prevail. Romantic love, family unity and a daughter's loyalty to her father are all lost in the upheaval.

Guiches was quite clear about what was the hero of his novel and he was disappointed when, because of Cherbulliez already having used the title, he was unable to call it La Bête. In his preface to the novel, he insists that this title was "Le seul vocable qui s'adaptait en toute exactitude, tant à l'expression de l'idée qu'au développement de l'action.",

and he apologises for the inadequacy of the new title. Undoubtedly this lacks the effectiveness of the original title for a novel in which Guiches has tried to present as realistic a portrait as he could of the provincial town torn apart by the destructive effect of phylloxera.

His main character is Chavasseur, owner of important vine-growing land and a leading and influential citizen of the town. Whilst others are ruined in the early stages by the pest, he, at first, is untouched by it and gives the others confidence and hope in the common struggle for an effective antidote. Nowhere else in Guiches' work is there such a portrait of the dedicated tiller of the soil

Balzac writing his lyrical story of his native Touraine, Le Lys dans la Vallée, tells of Madame de Mortsauf's efficient management of her husband's estates, giving details of alterations she brought about to introduce the rotation of crops and overcome opposition from the peasants. She, however, was the wife of a former émigré aristocrat, not a farmer engaged in the eternal battle with the soil. Elsewhere in Balzac, particularly in Les Paysans, we find an account of the behaviour of the French peasant, but nowhere, as Guy Robert points out in his work on La Terre, does Balzac portray peasants in their constant struggle to win their livelihood from the land.

The eternal battle against the earth is clearly indicated in an early description. Chavasseur had:

des mains calleuses qui ne se fermaient plus...  
 Ses cheveux se révoltaient contre un récent  
 effort du peigne et sous cette sédition de  
 crins grisonnants, cabrés par mèches, la  
 figure, campée sur ses épaules de charroyeur,  
 apparaissait cuite par le soleil, passionnée,  
 violente, avec une expression d'autorité  
 qu'atténuait, épanoui dans la barbe, un  
 sourire de bon vivant, d'une loyale et joviale  
 rondeur. 15

In his detailed analysis of Zola's La Terre and its sources, La Terre d'Emile Zola, M. Robert refers to Guiches characters in L'Ennemi as almost bourgeois: "...enfin la vie qui leur est <sup>reste</sup> prêtée/trop précaire pour qu'ils puissent assumer une valeur de type universel."<sup>16</sup> Undoubtedly the vine-growers of Perdigoux are not identifiable with Zola's peasants and farmers. Indeed Guiches found the latter distasteful and unrealistic, sharing Anatole France's view that "la grossièreté qu'il leur donne sent le faubourg, non la campagne."<sup>17</sup>

Chavasseur is Guiches' representative of the tillers of the soil. "La terre est éternelle, on ne l'use pas," (L'Ennemi, p.3) he says. His house may be the house of a successful vinegrower, unlike Zola's more earthy and primeval grubbers of the earth, but it is welded to the land nonetheless: "...au pied de la Pistoule, écrasée sous la granitique masse de la montagne échouée dans l'Ile." (p.3) La Pistoule is an important landmark in Luzech.

Zola's conception of the land as a female fertilized by those who work it, exacting and extracting the limits of sacrifice and endurance from its devotees, has its parallel in L'Ennemi. Chavasseur is married to an indifferent wife:

Il avait reporté, dans sa passion pour le vignoble, la fougue de cette tendresse qu'il avait inutilement prodiguée. C'est seulement dans les Perdigoux qu'il vivait, que son cerveau s'embrasait, qu'il retrouvait les enthousiasmes de ses vingt ans, que son sang battait de magnanimes pulsations. Sa vigne n'était plus une chose pour lui, mais une créature qu'il épousait. (p.33)

Guiches presents Chavasseur as a God-fearing vine-grower, respected by his neighbouring farmers, although they did not share his beliefs: "car il avait de sa foi l'affirmation

robuste." (p.33) Baduel, the schoolmaster, was tormented by his disbelief which science had led him to. This undoubtedly echoes, however faintly, the growing disillusionment among contemporary writers<sup>19</sup> with the cult of harsh realism and a desire to escape from the depressing truths of science and society.

Esther, Chavasseur's daughter, in some respects bears a strong resemblance to Céleste Prudhomat. Educated at boarding school at Toulouse, she begins to appreciate "l'aristocratique tenue du couvent". (p.14) As Céleste had grown away from her parents, so Esther, her father's favourite daughter, finally rejects hers in their hour of need. She is not admittedly of the same humble origin as Céleste, just as the vine-growers of L'Ennemi are not the same savage tillers of the soil as the Fouan family in La Terre. She is a bourgeoisie, daughter of a well-to-do farmer. Nevertheless she symbolises in her development the corrupting power of the evil which is bringing disaster to the land and the lives of the growers. Initially a victim herself of the growing power of the local shady financier, Hector Jayan, to whom her father has to turn for help and who, for his own ends, succeeds in alienating the affections of Esther's fiancé Alfred Fonprat, she is later successfully wooed by Jayan and becomes his wife. Chavasseur would not have accepted him as a son-in-law as Jayan's father had been a criminal, and he himself had, it was suspected, made his money dishonestly. In the end, however, Chavasseur needs Jayan's money. He therefore abandons his principles and agrees to the marriage, only to find that his daughter is then in no mind to let him have the money her husband has promised. Jayan, too, discovers that Esther has no love for him, only for his fortune, which crumbles away in her

hands. The Abbé Mage remarks: "La bête a tout dévoré, tout, les vignes et les consciences." (p.331)

Chavasseur's dedication to the land and the way the land destroys him are the main theme of the novel.

Il se complaisait dans l'admiration fervente de son œuvre. Il oubliait tout. Sa famille, ses amis, ses préoccupations, tout disparaissait dans cet enchantement qui lui confisquait la pensée aussitôt qu'il entraît dans le bien. Et il marchait d'un pas actif enjambant les rames, s'embarrassant dans ces liens qui se tendaient vers lui et qu'il écartait d'un doux geste comme s'il se dégageait des caresses d'une nuée d'enfants. (p.72)

After the grape harvest Chavasseur watches the harvesters who had now finished their task:

cette famille de pauvres reprenant son chemin à travers les abruptes montées de Causse, les pieds des petits saignant sur les cailloux... et puis la faim, la mendicité, les maladies et la mort, la suprême délivrance qui les coucherait tous, l'un près de l'autre, dans cette terre qui les avait tués! Car ils mourraient de la terre, de la terre qui se retournait enfin contre ses bourreaux. (p.73)

The cruelty and violence of the land are effectively demonstrated by the suicide of one of the neighbouring farmers, Rigal, whose vines had been ruined by phylloxera and who had come to help Chavasseur. Rigal hoists himself up on to the edge of the great wine vat and "sa poitrine soulevée, siffla un râle d'asphyxie. Ses jambes s'agitèrent en une contorsion de culbute et il chavira dans la mare bourbeuse, coulant à fond, d'une verticale tombée de bloc." (p.76)

Rigal's body, when discovered and pulled from the vat "semblait s'être gelé dans le grand air et s'allongeait, la figure tuméfiée par l'asphyxie, blêmie par le vin, mouchetée de grains violets écrasés sur ses joues." (p.78)

His wife is seized "d'une furieuse convoitise, d'une démente indignation... secouée dans ses haillons par une colère épileptique, elle s'abattit, les ongles en avant, sur la figure du mort, lui désorbitant les yeux et elle déracina des chairs une poignée de barbe." (p.79)

Undoubtedly, whereas in Céleste Prudhomat Guiches wrote with evocative feeling about his native Albas and about Cahors, in L'Ennemi he is more preoccupied by the theme of moral decay in his characters. Occasionally we find a glimpse of the local scene. The scene from Esther's window: "Sur les berges, des lessiveuses accroupies battaient des linges qu'elles tordaient ensuite, à bout de bras, et, près d'elles, un charretier faisait basculer les tombereaux de sable qui dressaient des pyramides brunes, pailletées de verres scintillants." (p.201)

It is the phylloxera insect, however, which occupies Guiches' attention and as it takes a hold on Chavasseur's vineyards he describes in detail the terrible devastation and deformation of plant life which takes place,<sup>20</sup> the care with which Chavasseur undertakes his own research on the insect, Hector Jayan's lecture on the menace to the local people and their anger which he brings down on Chavasseur and his family in consequence.

Guiches' novel is punctuated again by scenes which recall the technique of Flaubert in Madame Bovary and subsequently by Zola, the treatment of a dual theme, weaving an intricate tissue of language and response between the background and the foreground, forging a link between apparently unrelated



themes. Hector Jayan's and Esther's visit to a local place of pilgrimage is a case in point. Guiches describes the scene outside the church, against a background of banners and crutches, crowds of devoted pilgrims, families picnicking on newspaper in the open, and the monk Ligouri then standing on a farm cart as a platform to preach to the crowd. As they watch the scene, Jayan tells Esther of the marriage between Alfred, whom she had hoped to marry herself, and another woman. Jayan's part in this has been machiavellian from the start since he had taken steps to see that Alfred would drift away from Esther while he was studying in Toulouse. Esther defends Alfred bitterly. The words of the priest are heard seeming to comment on Esther's problem too: "Pardonnez-nous nos offenses, comme nous pardonnons à ceux qui nous ont offensés." (p.214)

The words of Jayan and the voice of the preacher alternate. For Esther, hearing the preacher: "La voix seule qui résonnait dans les âmes suscitait de chaudes vibrations, s'adoucissait en des tendresses commisératives."

Jayan asks for Esther's forgiveness. Then, ambiguously referring to the voice and perhaps to Esther as well: "Elle semblait extasiée, dans l'immobilité d'une fascination." The preacher repeats his prayer. The priest departs and Esther remarks: "Je ne vous en veux pas." This, again, is both a reply to Jayan and a reaction to the unrealistic message of the priest.

One is inevitably reminded here of the scene of the Comices Agricoles in Madame Bovary. Undoubtedly Guiches' version lacks the stabbing irony of the auctioneer's 'Fumiers' in response to Rodolphe's attempts to seduce Emma Bovary.



Nevertheless this dual theme with a related thread is an effective device in L'Ennemi too.

Guiches' portrait of the mysterious, unscrupulous Jayan is one of the main features of the novel, indicating the rise of the unprincipled in the wake of the disaster of phylloxera, buying up the land of ruined farmers and undermining the stern principles of morality and loyalty which had been the hallmark of the life of country people for generations. For all Jayan's cold and ruthless ambition, however, he feels a genuine love for Esther. He uses his cunning and his money to get both her and Chavasseur's blessing, but he mellows under her influence and it is she, in the end, who makes the running in steadily consuming his wealth.

Jayan, who survives the holocaust, has much in common with other Guiches heroes in that his desires are selfish with a strong amoral vein. Jayan is a symptom of the general disintegration of life. People who returned to the area after a prolonged absence were amazed by the changes which had taken place:

Ainsi que la terre, les caractères, leur semblait-il, s'étaient appauvris... une corruption germait, gagnant les consciences, démolissant de vieilles honnêtetés réputées inébranlables et qui s'effondraient à grand bruit, faisaient des écroulements d'édifices ou, misérablement, se dissolvaient dans l'âpreté de la lutte, dans les calculs avortés des bas expédients. (p.98)

There is a dual link between the gradual infecting of plant life and the vitiation of human morality. Alongside that of cause and effect, which is clearly the principal message of the novel, there runs the theme of the farmer's consanguinity with his land. Chavasseur tells Jayan: "Nous avons les qualités et les vices de notre terre...Le vin, c'est notre sang... une cause possible de cette gangrène qui nous envahit." (p.169)

# NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. See Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter 1, "Je veux m'en aller."
2. See note 6 to Part I, Chapter 1.
3. See note 2 to Part I, Chapter 1.
4. Au Banquet de la Vie, p.10: "Oh! Que cette sentimentalité va me gêner et me faire souffrir! Il faut que je m'en affranchisse. Sans quoi, elle ferait de moi, au lieu du serviteur de mon cerveau, qui est sain, l'esclave de mon cœur, ce fou!"
5. Quoted by Henri Austruy, op.cit., vol. 142, p.14.
6. See part 1, *supra*, p.29.
7. Martin Turnell, The Novel in France, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1951, p.10.
8. Céleste Prud'homme, Modern Bibliothèque, A. Fayard, Paris, 1905, pp.5-7.
9. Guiches tells us in Au Banquet de la Vie, pp.109-114, that Gambetta had been reluctant to revisit Cahors: "Il s'était fait violence car il lui répugnait de retourner dans sa ville natale qui avait poursuivi, à coups de pierres, sa voiture de fugitif dix ans auparavant." Ten years earlier Gambetta had escaped by balloon from Paris, which was under siege from Bismarck's army, to rally the armies in the provinces.
10. General Pierre Keller, op.cit., p.268.
11. General Pierre Keller, op.cit., p.266.
12. Au Banquet de la Vie, op.cit., p.141.
13. G. Linor, Gustave Guiches, published in Comœdia, 1 December, 1913.
14. Au Banquet de la Vie, p.189. Sarcey continued: "La voie vous est ouverte. Marchez. Apportez-moi vos livres et comptez que vous avez, en moi, un lecteur, un juge et un ami."
15. L'Ennemi, 1887, p.3.
16. Guy Robert, La Terre d'Emile Zola, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1952, p.80.
17. Au Banquet de la Vie, p.216 et seq.

18. L'Ennemi, Paris, Librairie Moderne, 1887.
19. Guiches was a close friend of Bloy and Huysmans, both of whom were bitterly opposed to the doctrine of positivism. Bloy's novel Le Désespéré, 1886, is a rejection of positivism and a declaration of religious faith. Huysmans' conversations with Guiches on the subject of disillusionment with contemporary trends are reported by Guiches in Le Banquet, p.111: "En Rade vient d'être pour moi une grande passion. Je m'y suis abîmé, avec enivrement, dans l'ordure des âmes et le néant des choses, mais c'est fini! Je n'en veux plus de cette porcherie de naturalisme."  
 In 1892, Guiches says of Huysmans, whose mistress had had to go into an asylum with acute mental illness: "L'atrocité de la réalité lui fait maintenant rejeter avec horreur le naturalisme. Il lui faut un idéal." (Le Banquet, p.245)
20. "La verdure semblait s'être ulcérée." (L'Ennemi, 1887, p.98) Guiches' choice of the vocabulary of human disease effectively conveys the virulence of the devastation: "Pustules", "abcès", "bourbillons", "fonticules purulents", "fistules", "suppuration".

Guiches the Naturalist

- (i) Aspects of Naturalism in Céleste Prudhomat (1886) and L'Ennemi (1887)

Guiches part in the publication of the Manifeste des Cinq was clearly a minor one. All recent commentators agree that its real authors were Bonnetain and Rosny (See Greaves<sup>1</sup>, Beuchat<sup>2</sup> and Dumesnil<sup>3</sup>). The magic importance of the figure 5 was undoubtedly the reason for the inclusion of the other signatories, to offset the Cinq de Médan who had put themselves forward as the disciples of Zola.

As Charles Beuchat points out, Guiches was "peu enthousiaste" as a signatory and indeed he raised explicit objections to certain parts of it, objections which were ignored by Rosny<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, Beuchat and Dumesnil agree that Guiches was in a better position than any of the others to make this gesture since he had never been guilty of audacious writing. Céleste Prudhomat notably lacked any exposé of the cruder aspects of provincial life or of human misery, aspects which Zola would not have failed to emphasise.<sup>5</sup>

To what extent then was Guiches a true Naturalist? In his memoirs, Au Banquet de la Vie, he remarks at an early stage of his life in Paris "Je lis. Je m'enthousiasme pour le mouvement naturaliste. J'y trouve des éléments essentiels à ma formation d'écrivain."<sup>6</sup>

Later in the same work he explicitly ranks himself with Bonnetain, Rosny, Descaves, and Margueritte among the Naturalists when he divides contemporary writers into the two camps of Symbolism and Naturalism.<sup>7</sup>

René Dumesnil, in his centenary article in Le Bouquiniste Français, August 1960, tells us that the absence of scurrilous passages in his writing "ne l'empêche pas de demeurer fidèle à la méthode naturaliste et de suivre le réel à la trace. Mais il faisait la différence entre le réel et le vulgaire."

This quality of moderation was the inspiration for Gustave de Malherbe's remarks to Guiches (see p.27) expressing the hope that the new generation of young writers would cleanse Naturalism of its excesses and would substitute "à l'étude exclusive de pourritures sociales une observation plus large et plus impartiale."<sup>9</sup> The inference was that these scandalous elements were not essential to Naturalism and were indeed a blemish which needed to be corrected, while remaining faithful to the other qualities of the Naturalist philosophy.

Léon Deffoux, however, writing in Mercure de France on the occasion of Guiches' death in 1935, comments:

On ne sait pas pourquoi ce psychologue discret, cet écrivain en demi-teintes, fit, un moment, figure de naturaliste. Aucun de ses livres, aucune de ses pièces, ne porte la marque de cette influence. Ses meilleurs ouvrages, 'Céleste Prudhomat', 'L'Ennemi', 'Le Tremplin', disent non sans talent, mais aussi sans passion excessive et sans parti pris, les misères des ruraux, la détresse des consciences aux premiers symptômes de ruine.<sup>10</sup>

The question raised by these conflicting views on Gustave Guiches' work is first and foremost: What constitutes Naturalism? If the essence of the movement lay in exaggeration, in the jaundiced and overdrawn portrayal of the crude and sordid side of life, then, clearly, Gustave Guiches was outside it. Charles Beuchat, however, maintains in his Histoire du Naturalisme that Naturalism is a wider philosophy: "Il est le goût de la réalité, de la vérité qui s'impose et qui s'exprime en face du rêve et du regret."<sup>11</sup>

The words "en face du rêve et du regret" imply a rejection of escape from reality. In other words the harshness of reality must be faced and the writer, basing his work on the faithful observation and translation of reality, will often conclude, but not necessarily, that life is ugly and unhappiness inevitable. This does not mean that he will indulge exclusively in ugliness and unhappiness, but that these aspects will receive the attention which is their due.

If, then, preoccupation with prostitution, incest, abject misery and the sordid conditions of working people were not a necessary part of Naturalism, Guiches cannot be excluded from the movement on the grounds that he did not describe these subjects in his work.

It must be said that Beuchat's treatise on Naturalism follows the movement from the earliest signs of this philosophy in Retif de la Bretonne and Choderlos de Laclos to the naturalism of the twentieth century as seen in the work of such writers as Sartre and Camus. This definition refers, therefore, to the essence of naturalism through the centuries.

To discover whether Guiches should be bracketed with the French Naturalist novelists of the nineteenth century we need to consider whether he shared the methods and beliefs of other Naturalists whose claim to this title is not disputed. The core of Zola's support in the new Naturalist movement which he dominated, and in doing so aroused the animosity of the Goncourts and of Daudet, was the group of writers who gathered round him at Médan and with him produced Les Soirées de Médan, 1880, as tangible evidence of their unanimity in proclaiming the new philosophy. What, then, is the common thread which

links together the six stories of the Soirées and the five writers, Maupassant, Huysmans, Céard, Alexis and Hennique? Very briefly, they present, not by any means with uniform skill, an anti-heroic view of war and those who take part. They emphasise the stupidity of both officers and soldiers and the waste of human life. They destroy the fallacy that only the enemy is cruel and inhuman. They destroy the popular illusion that war is a noble crusade and show that it is started by trivial stupidities and drunken folly. History, they tell us, is the record of the actions of absurd protagonists. The reality of war is not noble, but ignoble.

The conclusion we must draw from this is that humanity and human behaviour should be seen for what they are, motivated by selfishness, cruelty, stupidity, indifference, jealousy, greed. Naturalism is concerned, therefore, not just with social conditions, prostitution, poverty and the exploitation of the masses, but with a realistic analysis of human behaviour and a presentation of the true situation, which is that life is anti-romantic, that attitudes and relationships are governed by ambition, desire, jealousy, indifference, stupidity, pride, shame and simple personal self-interest.

There was nothing very new in this. Balzac's portrayal of society and its individual members was scarcely an optimistic one. Flaubert had already given his view of the stupidity of the bourgeois; Stendhal had already portrayed the cold exploitation exercised by society and the individual in Le Rouge et le Noir. What was new was the emergence of a group of writers dedicated to the study of the realities of ordinary existence. What held the Naturalist writers together was a devotion to the cause of debunking the myth that human



conduct ever had good or romantic motives and a proclamation of the truth that the good and the pure, wherever they were to be found, could only meet with exploitation, defilement, or, at best, indifference.

Céleste Prudhomat can, therefore, be accepted as a product of the new movement. Although lacking any particularly sordid episodes or scenes of degeneracy, it gives a very pessimistic account of human motives and indicates beyond ambiguity that selfishness, shame and unscrupulous ambition lie behind most human conduct.

Céleste's parents want to take her out of the dull environment which is theirs, away from Creysse with its hordes of mocking children and its petty rivalries. Their reward is to be scorned by Céleste who is ashamed of her origins, and finally to be rejected by her in their hour of need because Céleste is obsessed with her own fate.

The story is told with a subtle blend of irony and involvement.<sup>12</sup> In his memoirs Guiches writes: "Rien ni personne ne pourrait me détacher de l'amour qui me lie à ma petite héroïne. Tous les instants de ma vie deviennent les moments de la sienne."<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless Céleste is no harmless country girl. Although she is sacrificed on the altar of the class system, she is not an entirely innocent victim. Her behaviour is both vibrant and absurd. She belongs to the cynical human race just as much as does Jacques Mauvalon. Her dreaming, her sulky scheming, her sophisticated airs in a small provincial town and her ruthless, unprincipled attempt to force Mauvalon to marry her are as absurd as are the petty squabbles and intrigues of the local mayor and his rivals to dismiss her from her post.



Céleste Prudhomat is no less guilty of contributing to her own destruction than Flaubert's Madame Bovary. There is something of Maupassant's cynical detachment in the portrait of this young woman who is blind to the truth of her situation, who leaves behind the mocking village children of Marnières for a classroom of scarcely more respectful bourgeois children at Mazolles, who expects Jacques Mauvalon to ignore the social barrier between them and yet treats the parents of her children and the village councillors with disdain, who embarks on a career of self-advancement, but who cannot endure or control the children she has to teach.

Clearly, Céleste Prudhomat is more than the simple tale of a country girl who is abused by the local squire. It expresses in the tones of the true Naturalist both the injustices of society and the absurdity of the individual's efforts to make good in it. There is no doubt where the allegiance of the author of Céleste Prudhomat lay, sparing as he was with the more obvious signs of it. The contemporary social and educational aspects are fundamentally in the Naturalist tradition. Furthermore, occasionally, despite at least one critic's view to the contrary, he even shocks with a moment of brutal realism or sexual aberration. Céleste, jealous and bitterly hostile to her former friend, Germaine, describes imaginary physical deformities of hers to her lover, Mauvalon, who, instead of being horrified, is excited by them: "(...) elle en était venue jusqu'à profaner le corps de la jeune fille, le détaillant à Jacques, lui prêtant des difformités imaginaires et ne songeant pas que ces descriptions qu'il encourageait, dont il soupçonnait la fausseté rageuse, ne

faisait qu'enflammer le désir de son amant."<sup>14</sup>

Later, when Céleste lies dead in her bed having miscarried her child, Madame Prudhomat holds out the dead baby to the assistant schoolmaster, thinking it is his. He pushes it away in horror: "(...) et d'un geste brutal, comme s'il le souffletait, il repoussa le cadavre qui s'écrasa sur le plancher. Madame Prudhomat resta stupéfaite à considérer cette flaque de chair gelée qui faisait une grande tache visqueuse (...)"<sup>15</sup>

These elements are rare. It must be said, however, that Guiches did not always deserve the mantle of restrained respectability which has sometimes been ascribed to him.

Guiches, in the Naturalist tradition, had to give his work authenticity. As we have seen, the inspiration for the setting of the novel was not far to seek. His father's birthplace, Creysse, gave him the Prudhomat's home village. His own home town of Albas and nearby Cahors gave him the basis for the documentation he needed. The streets of Cahors, the embankment of the river Lot and the buildings to which he refers in the novel were, and still are in many cases, authentic parts of the real town. Zola was impressed by the way Guiches had documented himself and told him so. Although Guiches pointed out to Zola that he had no need of documentation, since he was writing about his native Quercy, the fact remains that he did work carefully at the accuracy of his setting:

J'ai l'ambition de fixer sur le papier une étude consciencieuse des mœurs locales en 1880, et, comme cette œuvre quelque peu écrasante comporte une observation ultra-méticuleuse je n'avance que péniblement et avec d'infinis efforts.<sup>16</sup>

Guiches clearly shared the Naturalists' interest in

modern science and their belief in the need to introduce careful and precise descriptions of scientific and medical phenomena into literature, to give conviction and authenticity. Obvious examples of this are Céleste's pregnancy, miscarriage and suicide by poisoning in Céleste Prudhومات, and the descriptions of the symptoms of phylloxera on vines and subsequently of the insect itself in L'Ennemi.

Guiches was alert to the impact of new developments in the modern world and was quick to exploit them in his work. While working on L'Ennemi he wrote to Maratuech: "Je tiens, je crois, des scènes inédites, entr'autres des projections de phylloxéra au moyen d'un microscope solaire sur les murs d'un prétoire de campagne."<sup>17</sup>

The role of science in the lives of the vinegrowers is a significant one. Their plight at the hands of the dreaded insect leads Chavasseur to study possible antidotes and Jayan gives a public lecture with lantern slides of the phylloxera aphid, so that the people can see what they are up against.

The corollary of this acceptance of the role of science, that is the rejection of the church, is present on this occasion too. For the public lecture "on avait discuté l'admission du clergé, mais les libérales opinions du richard avaient prévalu." (p.120)

The abbé's reaction to the horrors of phylloxera was that it was predicted in the Bible, an indication of the church's unrealistic and irrelevant attitude. In Céleste Prudhومات we find the same alignment of the Church with the Establishment, standing aloof from the real anguish of the people. Church-going is the prerogative of the family of Céleste's rich schoolfriend Germaine Mazurier. Céleste thinks of

herself as "une libre-penseuse" and does not take communion. She is pleased, when out visiting the dignitaries of Mazolles to pay her respects as a newcomer, to find that the curé has been detained at the church by confessions. Céleste, we are told, was glad, "ne voulant voir que la société républicaine."<sup>18</sup> The mayor of the town, too, was bitterly hostile to the sisters of the convent school.<sup>19</sup>

Nowhere in Guiches do we find a sympathetic consideration of the position of the church. Céleste's father, who had been a free-thinker all his life, went to confession after his vines were ruined by phylloxera. Her mother tells Céleste: "Maintenat il croit que c'est le bon Dieu qui a mis la bête dans les vignes parce qu'on 'rénéguait' trop dans le pays."<sup>20</sup> As in L'Ennemi, the church is associated with disaster. Céleste's disastrous pregnancy and consequent despair lead her first to attempted suicide, then to going to confession. But the astounding result of attending church on Christmas morning with her mother and hearing *Adeste Fideles* sung by the congregation is that she has the idea of having an abortion. The ironic contrast between the birth of Christ and the projected death of her own child seems as damning an indictment of the church's power for good as can be found anywhere in contemporary literature:

Confiante dans l'avenir, ayant décrété la  
mort de cet enfant qu'elle portait hon-  
teusement elle remercia Dieu de cette  
inspiration et, radieuse, elle aussi, chanta  
la gloire de l'enfantement divin.

"Natum videte

Pannis involutum." (p.107)

The irony of her inspiration and her joy here is as far removed from the spirit of the Nativity as is the painter's song of romantic love from the reality of Céleste's own destiny. The strains of this theme recur throughout the novel and come to accompany her last moments.

Si, pauvre mignon, tu connais l'amour  
Fais-le-moi connaître en rêvant un jour,  
Selon moi, vois-tu, c'est l'indifférence  
Qui blesse le cœur et le fait souffrir. (p.122)

The reality of life and death is cold and relentless, however, and ignores the hopes of the fervent believer or the romantic dreamer. Céleste, for all her efforts, dies an ugly death.

Sur sa figure où les os semblaient prêts  
à crever la peau, les yeux se détachaient  
plus noirs, charbonneux avec une fixité  
d'épouvante, regardant droit devant eux une  
chose terrifiante qu'eux seuls voyaient, et  
de ses mains blêmes, crispées, elle repoussait  
la couverture comme si cette chose hideuse se  
rapprochait, lui marchait sur le corps. (p.122)

Just as Chavasseur's reality is a bitter and disillusioned death from the failure of his land and of his race, ruined by phylloxera and abandoned by the selfish greed of his daughter, so the reward reaped by the Prudhomat family, for all their labours and hopes, is complete despair.

As Mme Prudhomat heard the bells ring out for Céleste's funeral, she put her hands to her ears to keep out the sound:

"...car ce branle désolé lui disait la réalité,  
la chose la plus horrible de son malheur, lui  
faisait voir cette chair sortie d'elle, emboî-  
tée dans le cercueil, emportée par des inconnus,  
enfouie sous la terre, rongée par les vers,  
pulvérisée par le temps. Elle voyait aussi  
leur vieillesse, à Prudhomat et à elle, irré-  
missiblement assombrie, les journées sans pain,  
les soirées sans feu, la misère sans le  
courage à la lutte, sans le repos de cœur,  
sans cette consolation radieuse que leur  
donnait Céleste et dans laquelle ils abritaient  
leur pauvreté. (p.123)

Even death, the brutal finality, is not to be imagined as indicating noble peace at last. Céleste's unconfessed young admirer throws himself upon her body with all the violent frustration of unassuaged passion, threatening to take in death what had been denied him in life:

- il l'étreignit, nouant ses bras à son corps raidi qu'il ne pouvait soulever et, jetant ses lèvres sur cette bouche blême, il s'acharna dans un baiser furieux, bestial, où grondait la rage d'amour que pendant une année lui avait dévoré le cœur. Mme Prudhomat, eut un cri d'horreur et se jeta sur l'adjoint, se cramponnant à ses habits pour l'arracher à cet embrassement. (p.124)

Clearly, the cold despairing pattern of reality is as dominant here as in any of the stories of Les Soirées de Médan. There are echoes, elsewhere too, of Les Soirées de Médan, the Naturalist anti-militarist manifesto. As Céleste lies dying a totally inglorious death, outside can be heard the sounds of the day of conscription and the words of the young men's song:

Il faut partir, camarades conscrits.  
Il nous faut obéir  
Quand nous saurions del'y perdre la vie. (p.121)

In contrast with Zola, Huysmans and the Goncourts, however, Guiches wrote consistently about people who were trying to escape from their misery rather than become perversely acquiescent victims. The emphasis in his novels is on the efforts of the individual and his or her family to survive the threat of disaster rather than on the depths of squalor or moral disintegration towards which they are sinking or have already sunk. Furthermore, his characters are mainly drawn from a different social background from those studied by the more popular Naturalist novelists.

Guiches' farmer in L'Ennemi, Chavasseur, is an enthusiastic landowner like Zola's père Fouan, but the similarity ends there. Chavasseur is primarily a figure of respectability, successful and prosperous. Where Fouan is primeval in his grasping hunger for the mere possession of land, Chavasseur's obsession is with his own vineyard, which brings him not only a living but a basis for honesty and respectability. Only the destruction of his vines brings down the edifice of uprightness which is built on their foundation:

Vous voyez d'ici mon but, une étude robuste de vigneron, une sorte d'apôtre de la vigne, une notoriété de l'honnêteté, d'intelligence pratique, un amour fou de la propriété. L'honnêteté triomphante dans la prospérité, cela va de soi, décadente dans l'épreuve, démolie par la misère, arrivant aux dernières compromissions.<sup>21</sup>

Zola's 'père Fouan' is a totally different figure from that of Chavasseur. Both are a part of the land which gives them their livelihood and for which they sacrifice their independence. The Fouan family, however, are even more a product of the earth. Whereas Chavasseur sees the disease which is attacking the vines as "une cause possible de cette gangrène qui nous envahit,"<sup>22</sup> Zola's farmers are by nature and instinct, not as a result of their contact with nature, as primitive and destructive as any other product of the soil: "Ces Fouan avaient poussé et grandi là depuis des siècles, comme une végétation entêtée et vivace."<sup>23</sup>

The 'gangrène', to which Chavasseur refers as having caused Firal, a local vine-grower, to burn down his house after



insuring it, was a permanent element of Zola's peasants, whose morality accepted any cunning, vice, or extortion to feed their unending hunger for land.

Both L'Ennemi and La Terre were published in 1887, with Guiches' novel preceding that of Zola by some six months. There is no evidence to suggest that either of them was aware of the other's work. The two novels are radically different and give a contrasting view of provincial life. Instead of Zola's brutal portrait of the peasant, Guiches gives a more moderate one. His support for the Manifeste des Cing indicates Guiches' reaction to Zola's representation of the farming community.

Guy Robert in La Terre d'Emile Zola compares the two novels and considers that Guiches did not fully exploit the dramatic possibilities of the suggested link between the economic ruin of the vineyard owners and their moral disintegration. The characters, he points out, are almost bourgeois: "(...) enfin la vie qui leur est prêtée reste trop précaire pour qu'ils puissent assumer une valeur de type universel."<sup>25</sup> This is undoubtedly an accurate assessment of the pretensions of the two novelists. Zola's peasants belonged not to the Loire Valley but to Zola's general concept of the bond between the peasant and the land. Guiches' farmers belonged to Quercy. They covered the fields and slopes of Guiches' native province with the noble vine, as his father had done, until phylloxera struck hard. Their children rode the hills of Quercy on horseback, exploring the beauties of the landscape that Guiches knew as a boy. Inevitably, the underlying 'message' of the novel is diluted by his interest in the background and individuality of his peasants.



Nevertheless, there are echoes of Zola's approach in the conflict between the peasants and 'la bête'. Robert comments on the similarity between Chavasseur cursing heaven for the ravages of phylloxera, and La Grande cursing God for the ravages of the hailstorm. Of Chavasseur Guiches wrote: "Les blasphèmes s'accumulaient sur ses lèvres. Les plus ordurières imprécations tonnaient, inspirées par la pensée dominante de faire souffrir Dieu."<sup>26</sup> But, Robert concludes, there is much less relief in Guiches' novel.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Chavasseur's bitter blasphemy is much more dramatically important than that of La Grande, since he has so far clung to his faith in the face of the scepticism of those around him: "Pour lui toute discussion était une injure à Dieu et toute raillerie un blasphème qu'il châtiait aussitôt de toute la violence de sa réprobation."<sup>28</sup>

In quoting examples of the still strong Naturalist tradition in 1887, Robert compares Guiches' attitude to reality with those of Rosny and Huysmans: "Guiches, en dépit de ses recherches de styliste, essaie d'en donner une traduction plus fidèle qui reste assez pâle."<sup>29</sup>

Undoubtedly, by comparison with Zola, Guiches fails to exploit the latent sexual and violent aspects of his story. Where Zola would explore the intimate lives of the ordinary peasants, would see in the bent figures of the women washing their clothers the lascivious movements of their bodies, Guiches remains objective, simply describing what he sees.<sup>30</sup>

When Zola describes, in La Terre, the sleeping arrangements

of the casual harvesters in the barn<sup>31</sup> it is an occasion for sexual opportunism. When Buteau and Francoise take time to rest in the fields at mid-day, he attempts to seduce her.<sup>32</sup> When Guiches' grape pickers rest in the barn after lunch there is no suggestion of primitive desires being unleashed, only the wearied repose of workers in the heat of the day. While Rigal's wife and children sleep he goes off to drown himself in the great vat of grape-juice. The focus of our attention is once again on the desperate reactions of the characters to their problem, and not on the primitive urges of the peasants.

Guiches' excursions into the more sensational sexual relationships are limited to the unfulfilled ambitions of his hero Jayan in L'Ennemi. When out riding with Esther, he draws nearer to her "Ses yeux la dévisagèrent brutalement, se jetèrent sur elle, arrachèrent son amazone, ses jupes, sa chemise, la campèrent ainsi, dans une nudité de nymphe, cambrée sur les reins. Elle se sentit déshabillée." (p.260) But he ravishes her only with his eyes and she only senses that he is mentally stripping her of her clothes.

Jayan is the only character in L'Ennemi who comes anywhere near to being sexually venturesome. He remembers with horror how he had caught 'la lèpre' after going with girls when a young man: "cet écaillage de sa chair, cette exfoliation de ses tissus, cette pourriture suintant par tous les pores." (p.261) He buys products to rejuvenate his appearance and sees himself if not "dans la grâce de la jeunesse, au moins dans l'épanouissement de la virilité." Esther arouses lascivious and perverted desires in him: "Il passait de longs instants, silencieux, à supputer les emprises du premier déshabillage... projetait les initiations à de monstrueuses débauches...Son rêve le plus

précieux était de se dépeindre Esther ravagée par l'horrible mal." (p.280) But the fears, or promise, that Esther will be in fact a shocked and savaged victim of Jayan's tortured desires remain unrequited. The curé tells Mme Chavasseur she must not allow Esther to go out with Jayan unaccompanied and shortly afterwards they are married. No further references are made to Jayan's sexual ambitions.

Alfred, Esther's first love, is led into a sordid and dishonourable affair in Toulouse, a victim of Jayan's schemes to estrange him from Esther. The only explicit glimpse of this sexual lapse however is when Esther tries to bring their relationship back to what it was before he left: "Elle chercha dans l'épaisseur blafarde de cette corpulence l'identité de son rêve." (p.206) Her efforts to embrace him into submission fail. He is tempted by the warmth of her body but only for a moment. He unfastens her fingers from his neck and as he picks up his coat the photograph of a nude woman falls out.

Anatole France, quoted by Guiches in his memoirs, accused Zola of distorting country life beyond recognition:

Au dire de M. Zola, la terre est une femme ou une femelle. Pour lui c'est tout un. Il nous montre les anciens mâles usés à l'engrosser. Il nous décrit les paysans qui veulent "la pénétrer, la féconder jusqu'au ventre" qui l'aiment "pendant cette intimité chaude de chaque heure" et qui respirent "avec une jouissance de bon mâle l'odeur de sa fécondation".<sup>33</sup>

By contrast, Guiches' concept of 'la terre' was that of a being worshipped and exploited by the farmer and the peasant, giving them food for their minds and their bodies, but finally taking from them their health and their lives. For Chavasseur it is the vine that he worships: "C'est seulement

dans les Perdigoux (Chavasseur's vineyard) qu'il vivait, que son cerveau s'embrasait, qu'il retrouvait les enthousiasmes de ses vingt ans, que son sang battait de magnanimes pulsations. Sa vigne n'était plus une chose pour lui, mais une créature qu'il épousait." (p.30)

The female aspect of nature does not, however, indicate the same biological function as it does for Zola. For Chavasseur the vines provide him with a purpose, an object for the devotion his wife does not want. He regards the wine more as a noble and divine creation. He pulls off a vine leaf and declares: "qu'elle était l'oeuvre par excellence, la création privilégiée de Dieu..." Le Seigneur a dit, "Je suis la vigne." (p.35)

The vine absorbs his life just as the earth takes possession of the lives and the labours of the peasants; "Il oubliait tout. Sa famille, ses amis, ses préoccupations, tout disparaissait dans cet enchantement qui lui confisquait la pensée, aussitôt qu'il entrait dans le bien." (p. 75)

When the grape-pickers finish their task Chavasseur sees:

"cette famille de pauvre reprenant son chemin à travers les abruptes montées du causse, les pieds des petites saignant sur les cailloux (...) et puis la faim, la mendicité, les maladies et la mort, la suprême délivrance qui les coucherait tous, l'un près de l'autre dans cette terre qui les avait tués! Car ils mourraient de la terre, de la terre qui se retournait enfin contre ses bourreaux.

The word "bourreaux" comes as something of a shock here, and the meaning suddenly becomes clear. Man uses and abuses nature for his own ends. He fastens on to it for his own salvation. It is not a reciprocal bond, as Zola sees it, but a desparate exploitation which has ultimately to be paid for.

In Zola the peasant families are a phenomenon of nature, with the same instincts as animals, the same struggle for survival, the same rapacious greed and appetites, the same acceptance of the prevailing right of youth and strength over age and incapacity, hence the stripping of the possessions of the old by their young.

France accused Zola of lack of good taste, in a reference to the name Jésus-Christ, given to one of the more scandalous characters. The peasants' attitude to the church and the priest in La Terre is that of children of nature towards something irrelevant to their situation. In L'Ennemi Chavasseur is a fervent believer and he it is who stands as the central figure of the novel, although surrounded by unbelievers:

"Cette foi, héréditaire dans sa famille ainsi que le culte de l'honnêteté, était en lui à ce point despotique, qu'il l'arborait presque comme un défi et recherchait les occasions de l'afficher."

(p.31) But even the atheists around him had their doubts. Baduel, the schoolteacher, was tormented by his scientific disbelief and expressed the desire for proof so that he could believe.

Hubert Juin in his notes to La Terre<sup>34</sup> regards the novel as a valuable historical social document: "Aujourd'hui, La Terre apparaît comme un très utile document d'histoire sociale. Il porte témoignage sur les formes du labour rustique et sur la mentalité paysanne au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle..." Perhaps L'Ennemi has at least an equal right to be considered a useful historical document bearing witness to the ravages of phylloxera in the vineyards of South-Western France.

The authenticity of Guiches portrait of the life of a

small country town is undoubtedly all the more accurate for not being distorted by a particular and dominating interpretation of its epic role. Not everything is dovetailed into the peasants' obsession with the earth. Jayan is the local financier and moneylender with a particular hold over the people, large numbers of whom have got into his debt and thus into his power. The importance of money in the lives of the farmer and peasant is constantly referred to.

Madame Chavasseur came from a similar family of usurers:

(...)fille unique des Valabert de Carnac, une race de souche sordide, si scrupuleusement débarbouillée par le temps et si magnifiquement embourgeoisée par la solidité de ses capitaux, que le souvenir des originelles scories s'était à peu près abolie dans la mémoire des survivants. (p.27)

Her great-grandfather had been the founder of the Valabert fortune, "en qui l'implacabilité la plus insoluble s'alliait à une expression d'amère jovialité." He spent his time collecting debts, knocking on doors and accosting people in the streets. "Devant lui le paysan suppliait, se frappait les tempes, sanglotait: la femme s'abattait sur ses genoux, s'arrachait les cheveux à poignées, s'entourait de ses enfants, implorant grâce." (p.27)

This link with the past, together with the character of Jayan gives the novel balance and depth. Although Madame Chavasseur long refused to receive Jayan in her house, he was the modern counterpart of her great-grandfather. Although a respectable banker, he nonetheless was held in awe by the peasants, and women in debt sometimes came to offer themselves or their daughters to him in satisfaction of their debts.

The inevitable influence of Balzac's great financiers is visible in the character of Jayan. Just as the power of ownership brings first confidence and enthusiasm, then misery and despair, so, rising up to take its place as the dominating force, the power of money, in the shape of the moneylender, steps in to exploit and to undermine. The ensuing battle between the land and capitalism results in the capsizing of the world of honest morality, sold out to the capitalist whose fortunes rise and prosper from the wreckage. Not even the capitalist is to emerge unscathed, however. As in Céleste Prudhomat, in the end there is no hope, no victor. Chavasseur's daughter marries Jayan and ruins him. An ironic accident of fate for the man who thought he had won everything? Not so. Guiches conceived it as the deliberate revenge of Chavasseur for the loss of his land:

C'est alors que désillusionnée, frappée au cœur, elle épousera le capitaliste, la mort dans l'âme et j'indiquerai que le vigneron en accordant sa fille résolue à ruiner le capitaliste aura vengé sa propriété.

Vous le voyez, ce sera la lutte sauvage entre ces deux forces le capital et la propriété.

J'embraserai tout le pays ruiné par le fléau, les grandes débâcles, les prostitutions occultes d'abord, affichées ensuite, les types grotesques d'inventeur de remèdes contre le phylloxéra et une personnalité comique, le fils du vigneron qui passe sa vie à échouer au baccalauréat et qui se manifeste comme poète au risque de tuer son père de désespoir.<sup>21</sup>

Jayan writes a despairing letter to Chavasseur indicating his impotence in Chavasseur's struggle to rescue his land from complete devastation. The vinegrower is hoist by his own petard, for not only does his daughter ruin the capitalist by her extravagance, she also refuses to let him help her father. In the end, both are ruined.



Guiches' characters demonstrate to the full the failure of society to solve its problems and the conflict of interests which lead to self-destruction. Chavasseur's devotion to his land and his vines is rewarded not by prosperity and a happy family life, but by the indifference of his wife and son and finally by the betrayal of the daughter who had carried his highest hopes. Even the all-powerful Jayan is defeated by the fatal flaw in his apparently all-conquering personality. His love for Chavasseur's daughter makes him welcome to his fold the only person who can ruin him.

The added ingredient in this novel is the destructive pest, phylloxera, which provides the hand of destiny against which humanity is helpless. Not only do the victims destroy each other, but they are destined to fail, whatever their actions. On the whole Naturalism was more interested in man's inhumanity to man and did not invoke the presence of super-human forces except pain and death. Schopenhauer's philosophy of pessimism depicted a completely objective world from which man could obtain no salvation, there could be no escape from pain and, ultimately, death. Zola's characters suffered relentlessly and inescapably from their inherited diseases and disabilities, but they are objective and an everpresent element in their lives. Guiches' vine plague comes like the wrath of heaven, like the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy the town of Macayrac. The analogy is not explicit. The disaster is seen as God's wrath by the representatives of the church in the novel, but this is denied by the vinegrowers. Nevertheless Chavasseur blasphemes against God when he sees the effects of the attack on his own vineyard and the slow but unremitting devastation of vineyards places almost as



much emphasis on the cruel hand of fate behind the misery, as on the misery and self-destructiveness of the characters. The very method of scientific analysis and investigation used by the vinegrowers to find out more about the scourge adds to the atmosphere of fear, horror and impending doom as well as to the revelation of growing intrigue and recrimination amongst the farmers.

Guiches' personal knowledge and experience of the disaster of phylloxera were perhaps the reason why his intended objective portrait of the disintegration of family life and traditional ethics was somewhat muted and overshadowed by a preoccupation in the novel with the pest itself. The authenticity and documented detail he brought to the study of the disease were in the best Naturalist traditions, but, in the event, the overall effect was to bring a not very Naturalist and rather biblical epic quality into his novel. Guiches was not, after all, a dispassionate observer of the scene. He was writing about his native Quercy and, although many miles away in Paris, he was conscious of the fact that his first novel Céleste Prudhomat owed its success to the authenticity of its setting. Now he was clearly hoping to repeat his success and combine with it a strongly Naturalist theme. Perhaps inevitably, the dual interest shows through.

Léon Bloy and Huysmans were both to acknowledge in L'Ennemi the marks of a successful novel of the times. Bloy in particular noted the importance of the role of money in the novel. In this respect we see again Guiches' debt to Balzac. The social exploitation of Céleste Prudhomat, in which money as such played no part at all, had now given

way to the widespread Realist-Naturalist notion of money as the vital factor in human misery and exploitation. The capitalist, Jayan, son of a criminal father and owner of a fortune made in suspicious circumstances and Madame Chavasseur's own ancestry, granddaughter of a money-lender who exploited his customers mercilessly, clearly fit in with the contemporary literary conceptions of money as a root of social evil. The financial dealings of Jayan, who bought Chavasseur's wine harvest to sell to Dutch merchants, the way he intimidated those who came to see him in his office, his manipulation of Alfred Fonprat's finances so that the latter finally forged Cécile Lodret's signature and put himself outside the law and into Jayan's hands, and Chavasseur's efforts to obtain funds for his grandiose scheme to flood the vineyards to destroy the vine plague, all these are in the best Balzacian tradition of monetary intrigue.

Despite Guiches' preoccupation with the vine growers of Quercy, as opposed to the general farming scene, his portrait of those whose lives are spent in an eternal struggle with the land has the same universal quality as Zola's in La Terre. He might have said after his first novel "Ma pauvre Prudhomat sans doute souffre et pleure dans vingt villages de France à cette heure même." And, later, he might have repeated with justification the same words à propos of Chavasseur. Those who had devoted their lives to the land and then lost them in the same cause are many in L'Ennemi. One farmer, driven to despair, sets fire to his barn. Another whose vineyard has been ruined by the vine plague drowns himself in a vat of winejuice. Chavasseur collapses when the final disaster strikes through his daughter Esther.

The novel follows the historical concept of the novel to which Flaubert, the Goncourts, Taine and Zola subscribed, presenting in fiction the underlying truths about humanity. Where it did not follow the trend of the eminent novelists of the day was in their pursuit of the degenerate and scabrous aspects of the social scene. Unlike theirs, his main characters belong to the class of successful farmers and landowners, professional and business men. Guiches' own background was that of a successful middle class home with well-to-do family connections. He had no experience of the struggles of the poor, particularly in the industrial towns, where the models for so many contemporary literary characters were to be found. Furthermore, he made no attempt to make up for this lack of personal experience by documenting himself from the many sources available. Throughout his literary career Guiches was consistent in this respect. His characters were almost always to experience the problems of the middle classes, a vast field, explored by Balzac and Flaubert before him, but not, primarily by Zola and the Goncourts, the leading Naturalists. Céleste Prudhomat was of humble origin, but her ambition and her education quickly separated her from her beginnings. She was exploited by the class she was struggling to join but she had nothing but contempt for the local townspeople or even her own parents. The main focus of attention in Guiches' first novel was on the luring attractions of the life of wealth and ease represented by Céleste's friends the Mazuriers and her lover Jacques Mauvalon. Unlike many others who had portrayed the middle classes, Guiches was not unsympathetic to them. Madame Mazurier, for example, early in

the novel, is genuine and unpretentious:

Sa figure grasse et sans beauté respirait une bonté domestique, sans âpreté bourgeoise, une bienveillance de femme économe et riche, adoucissant son regard pâle, traînant dans sa voix qui ne s'élevait que dans les discussions de cuisine, et restant fixée sur la bouche en expression affectueuse, toujours prêt à s'attendrir.<sup>22</sup>

Later, the Mazuriers are shocked by Mauvalon's treatment of Céleste and his hopes of marrying Germaine are frustrated.

On the other hand, Guiches did not hesitate to exploit the seamier side of human nature in the more sinister character of Jayan, a capitalist who had risen from humble and criminal origins to a position of wealth and power. Taine's doctrine of the essential value of vice and virtue as products of society, and therefore subjects to be treated in literature, finds its dutiful observance here. Just as Vautrin was the evil genius whose machiavellian intrigues threatened the moral fabric of Rastignac's world, so Jayan's financial machinations in Toulouse and Macayrac brought financial and moral bankruptcy to Alfred Fonprat and death to his mother. But, unlike Vautrin, Jayan is haunted by the dread of growing old, by an obsessive guilt complex relating to his youth and by dreams of sexual perversion involving the virtuous Esther, Alfred's betrothed and daughter of Chavasseur.

The contemporary public preoccupation with science, which was so fundamentally a part of Naturalism, receives full attention in L'Ennemi. The pest phylloxera is not only described in great detail, but is examined under the microscope, projected on the screen and discussed at a public lecture.

The popularity of science in the press is also reflected. A reward is announced in the press for the discovery of an effective antidote to the epidemic. Chavasseur sets up his own laboratory so that he can study the insect scientifically. He starts with great confidence that science will provide the answer. When it does not, the resultant disillusionment is all the more devastating, bringing the moral degeneration of the people. The unrelieved picture of despair and hastening disaster for Chavasseur is a reflection of the mood of pessimism which prevailed alongside the popular vogue of science. Schopenhauer's analysis of pain and suffering as the only positive truths is effectively played out in these pages, but Schopenhauer's prescription of moral asceticism finds no place in the novel. The disintegration of moral standards, which conforms more closely to the pessimism of the Goncourts, continues to the bitter end.

(ii) Documentation in Philippe Destal (1892) and La Pudeur de Sodome (1888)

When Zola complimented Guiches on the documentation in Céleste Prud'homat he replied that he had not needed to do any special research as he had been writing about his native Quercy. It is clear, however, that Guiches, when writing his first novel, had followed the principles of topographical accuracy which are part of the structure of documentation and that there were aspects of the novel for which he must have done careful research. His accounts of the effects of suffocation from noxious fumes in Céleste's first attempt at suicide, and the symptoms of a miscarriage induced by the drinking of poison, are evidence that he did believe in the importance of accuracy and authenticity. There is more evidence of careful research and preparation for his subsequent novels. While writing L'Ennemi he wrote to Francis Maratuech:

Je vous serais obligé de bien vouloir me donner la topographie de la presque île de Luzech et de ses environs. Je tiens à avoir les noms des villages, des hameaux, des propriétés, les noms surtout des montagnes qui encadrent le pèlerinage de l'Ile, les légendes, les surnoms.<sup>35</sup>

Maratuech was unable to comply with this request, but Guiches had another source: "Le docteur Pelissié m'a envoyé huit pages documentaires qui ont été très utiles."<sup>36</sup>

The following year, Guiches asked again for Maratuech's help, this time to find information about the Château de Roussillon, for his novel Philippe Destal: "En somme je voudrais (côté actuel) l'état présent des lieux, la topographie exacte, un peu d'environs et si c'était possible une photographie ou un dessin-fut-ce une ébauche informe; - (côté ancien) tout ce que les archéologues contemporains ou les chroniques anciennes du département disent sur ce château."<sup>37</sup> This was only the

beginning of his research. As his notebooks show, he read extensively among both medieval and modern authors for information on religious and natural mysticism. For the 'odour of sanctity' his source was Görres' Die Kristliche Mystik, 1836, for the philosophy of mysticism he made copious notes from Franck's La Philosophie mystique en France au XV<sup>111</sup><sup>o</sup> Siècle. He consulted Creuzer's La Symbolique for the use of symbols in religion. The role of science in the struggle between life and death sent him to the works of Bacon and Claude Bernard. For dreams of angels he consulted the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite. His research into sleepwalking brought him to consult an article in the Revue Philosophique of March, 1888, entitled Actes Inconscients dans le Somnambulisme by P. Janet. For the recreation of the past and the psychology of the lover he read Heinrich Heine's Lutetia, 1854. For ideas on diabolic mysticism he read Gérard de Nerval's translation of Faust and his preface, together with La Traité de la Réintégration by Martinez de Pasqualitz. (See Appendix C (iii)-(viii))

Whether or not Guiches received his requested information on the Château de Roussillon is not known. Certainly the Château de Morillon in his novel, called the Château de Roussillon in the first manuscript versions, differs in some respects from its model. Moreover the page headed Notes descriptives. Le château in Guiches' notebook is notably lacking in descriptive detail. On the other hand the documents relating to the château were available in the Bibliothèque Nationale, having been taken to Paris from Cahors during the French Revolution. The present owner of the castle, who is



engaged in an authentic reconstruction of the ruins, has, in the course of her research, put together a history of the castle which does not differ substantially from that given by Guiches in Philippe Destal. As for the topography and the appearance of the château, Guiches' account is at variance with the facts only in respect of the number of towers. He refers to six towers when in fact there were eight. This may well not have been apparent in 1890, however, since the building was in a very bad state and, as Guiches accurately relates in his novel, quantities of stonework, some of character and historic interest, had been carried away. Some of these are visible today in houses and villages in the area. As the excavation of Roman and medieval remains was an important phenomenon of the times, to which Guiches makes frequent reference in Philippe Destal and elsewhere, it seems probable that Maratuech or someone else was able to convey to Guiches the results of work done by local archeologists on the Château de Roussillon.

La Pudeur de Sodome (1888), was documented with equal care. (See Appendix C(ix)) Guiches made notes in Latin on the Book of Genesis, the Book of Judas, Deuteronomy and the Books of Wisdom and Ezekiel. This was, of course, essential reading. But it was by no means the sum total of his research. Guiches' recreation of the story of the town of Sodom inevitably reminds one of Flaubert's recreation of an episode of Jewish and biblical history in Hérodias (1877), and of his recreation of a period of Carthaginian history in Salammbô (1862).



The detailed documentation in Guiches' notebooks leaves us in no doubt about his intentions. He, like Flaubert, set out to instil life into his story by making it authentic in as many ways as possible. This led him to seek the most precise information about the life of the region, natural and human, together with all-important evidence of culture and religion. He sought to revive the mood and atmosphere of primitive and ritualistic idolatry in conflict with the worship of the true God. He therefore had to establish the pattern of pagan practices and their influence on the lives of ordinary people. He had also to set these events realistically near to the Dead Sea among vegetation and animal life belonging to that place and time. He consulted Josèphe's Histoire des Juifs for the background of the history of Sodom. He made further notes on L'Histoire d'Israël by E. Ledrain for the vegetation and animal life of Sodom together with other aspects of the town, its religion, its architecture, its surroundings and the river Jordan. His notes contain details of the priests' dress and of its symbolic meaning. For details of the festivals of the Phœnician religion he consulted Delessert's Voyage des Villes Maudites and for the texture and colours of the landscape of the area of the Dead Sea he referred to de Sauley's Voyage autour de la Mer Morte.

That Guiches was no more successful than Flaubert in making a remote and lifeless past real and urgent was not due to lack of authentic detail. Even a skilful and well-documented account of the setting cannot take the place of careful characterisation.

(iii) The Influence of Huysmans on the writing of *L'Ennemi*

On first meeting Huysmans Guiches was impressed by the conflict of scepticism, diabolism and realism in his face: "C'est le satanisme de Méphistofélès qui a si violemment écarté ces oreilles et retroussé, comme ceux d'un faune, ces sourcils moustachus..."<sup>38</sup> As his hostility towards Huysmans changed to friendship, he was influenced by his friend's ideas and was inspired to rewrite his manuscript of *La Bête* "d'un bout à l'autre". In *Le Banquet* Guiches refers to his new awareness of the power of the adjective, adverb and verb, which he now put to more effective use. It seems clear, however, that more was changed in the new version than simply the style. The role of religious belief in Chavasseur's character remained fundamental but there were changes. The explicit statement of the vinegrower, "Le bon Dieu, Il voit clair et Il ne punit pas les innocents",<sup>39</sup> was omitted in the final version of *L'Ennemi*. On page ninety of the 1887 edition, Chavasseur, analysing the previous threats of the livelihood of the vinegrower from insects and then the elements, remarks that "L'apparente fantaisie de ces forces était le secret de Dieu." This sentence, not in the manuscript, suggests again that the ways of God, even in the eyes of Chavasseur, the believer, were not easy to understand. Are these ideas a result of Guiches' friendship with Huysmans, whose domestic life was overshadowed by his <sup>common law</sup> wife's disturbed mental condition and who reacted in a similar way to the idea of a merciful God?<sup>40</sup> The pious acceptance of the apparent injustice of God's will was clearly less desirable, or at all events less tenable to Guiches after his friendship with Huysmans. The words of the manuscript which suggest such acceptance were omitted in 1887: "Ce sont de terribles

épreuves, mais le murmure serait un blasphème car telle est la volonté de Dieu." (La Bête, p.48) Guiches no longer has Chavasseur expressing a view of optimism based on his faith in God:

C'est une crise qui passera comme celle  
del'oïdium, la vigne est une création  
directe de Dieu. C'est lui-même qui l'a  
créée et elle doit être impérissable. (La Bête, p.53)

This passage was omitted from the published version. When he finally sees that Les Perdigoux have at last been attacked by the plague, Chavasseur curses God:

Sa rage se soulageait à rouer, en coups de  
fouet de charretier, ce Tout-Puissant, qu'il  
avait naïvement adoré tant qu'il lui avait  
été favorable. (L'Ennemi, p.100)

Céleste Prudhomat had already given a cynical view of the irrelevance of God and the church to the plight of those who suffer in society. Perhaps La Bête, as it was originally to be called, would have offered a less sophisticated peasants' and farmers' cry against the unjust excesses of weather and disease. In effect what emerges is a picture of a remote God who does not listen and does not apparently care:

Il murmura contre la volonté qui présidait  
à cette arbitraire distribution du mal; car  
il ne méritait pas ce privilège de dépossession.  
L'honnêteté des Sabadel était contestable.  
Ils étaient de misérables chrétiens, et  
pourtant le fléau les épargnait. (L'Ennemi, p.101)

None of this is in the surviving first manuscript of La Bête. It is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that the inspiration behind the undeniable change of emphasis was Huysmans'. What originally seems to have been conceived as a more precise evocation of the plight of the Quercy vine-growers, became a story of human struggle against hopeless odds in a world of unfathomable unreason and injustice. True, the elements of this broader canvas were already present and

only a change of emphasis was needed to alter its message. It is this change of emphasis which seems to bear the hallmark of Huysmans. Guiches, no doubt, met many whose outlook on life was dark and full of pessimism. Léon Bloy was one of these whom he knew well. But Guiches was able to escape Bloy's influence since no great sympathy existed between them. Huysmans was different. Apart from being Huysmans' constant companion at this period, Guiches was a sympathetic and, if one is to judge from his autobiography, uncritical friend.

In his pursuit of the revised message of his novel, or perhaps with a Flaubertian determination to eliminate unessential material from his final version, he also drastically reduced the role of some secondary characters. The Chavasseur's son, Maurice, an indolent failure at school and a reluctant and incompetent pupil at home when his father strove to teach him the essentials of vinegrowing, was a less negative character in the manuscript. There, he was an enthusiastic and industrious woodworker, spending his days in his own workshop, disregarding his father's problems but producing skilled craftsmanship of his own:

Il travaillait seul, vêtu d'une blouse blanche qui lui battait les talons ainsi qu'un peignoir et fumait des pipes sur lesquelles il sculptait de bizarres motifs. Sa famille avait fini par s'habituer à sa distraction. Il semblait un étranger fourvoyé dans une famille inconnue. Si on s'adressait à lui il fallait l'appeler plusieurs fois pour éveiller son attention. (La Bête, p.49)

Likewise, Alfred Fonprat, Esther's fiancé, who had gone to Toulouse to study, receives less attention in the 1887

edition than he was given in the manuscript of La Bête. Here we are told more about Alfred's life in Toulouse and Hector Jayan's deliberate plan to alienate him from Esther:

A Toulouse où il se rendait fréquemment il avait arraché Alfred de sa chambre d'étudiant et s'apitoyant sur la médiocrité de son existence il l'avait brutalement initié à la vie brillante, à la magnifique indépendance de l'argent. Pendant ces séjours qu'il lui faisait il lui demandait d'être son compagnon. Il le conduisait dans des cabarets à la mode, l'entourait de femmes qui se frottaient irrésistiblement à sa jeunesse, l'enlaçaient de leurs bras nus, lui jetaient au visage les parfums de leurs corsages ouverts. (La Bête, p.69)

In the published version Guiches refers more briefly to the episode in which, having given Alfred "une maîtresse de choix" in Toulouse, he makes the financial arrangement which is to lead to Alfred's disgrace in the eyes of Esther and her father. This trimming away of the outer edges of the story serves to concentrate interest and narrative on the events of Marçayrac itself and on the chief protagonists, Chavasseur and Jayan, whose tragedy it is. There were not only ideas and episodes, however, that Guiches pruned out in his revision of the manuscript. He also added substantially to the parts that he saw now as being particularly important. Esther's reminiscences of happier times with Alfred were sacrificed, but Jayan's relationship with his clients, particularly the women, was accentuated. Indeed, Guiches wrote the word 'Accentuer' in the margin alongside these references to Jayan in the manuscript. The 1887 edition has more detail of the readiness of clients' wives and daughters to prostitute themselves to win the financier's help for their husbands, whose affairs were in difficulties due to phylloxera. Moreover, lest we should fail to understand his meaning, he now gives it

explicitly:

(...) dans ce débâcle où les ressorts moraux se rompaient, une corruption germait, gagnant les consciences, démolissant de vieilles honnêtetés réputées inébranlables et qui s'effondraient à grand bruit, faisaient des écroulements d'édifices, ou, misérablement, se dissolvaient dans l'âpreté de la lutte, dans les calculs avortés des bas expédients. (L'Ennemi, p.137)

Here then was Guiches' second major novel being shaped not by the remote influence of Flaubert or Goncourt, but under the almost direct tutelage of a forceful personality with whom he was in almost daily contact.<sup>41</sup> In these circumstances we might pause to consider what the novel might have been had Guiches never met Huysmans. Every writer's work is the product of his own mind under the influence, conscious or unconscious, of other writers who have gone before him. Moreover, a work of art, once finished, must be accepted for what it is regardless of what it might have been. On the other hand, the heavy influence of Huysmans is sometimes so clearly discernible in the style of L'Ennemi that, like the vinegrower who looks at his polluted vine, we can visualise what was there before the disfigurement came along. While Maupassant, under the tutelage of his master, Flaubert, was writing stories in the purest and simplest French so that it was difficult to analyse the source of his success, there were others who strove to win public approval through the medium of artistic writing. This was the moment that Guiches chose, as many had advised him to, to abandon the example of Flaubert and to follow Huysmans. It was possibly an error of judgement. What his novel gained by way of a more brutal and savage portrait of the cruelty of this period of vinegrowing history in Quercy, it lost in the obscurity of the language and the verbosity of many passages.



Artistic writing wrought havoc in some pages of Guiches' novel. As a 'tour de force', a brief 'party-piece', this extravagant nineteenth-century fashion, inherited from the Goncourts, could hope to win some admiration and applause. Applied to a serious novel it could spell disaster. Fortunately not every page of L'Ennemi is marred by it, but enough for Huysmans to acclaim it and others to condemn it. Guiches too, in later years, attempted to salvage his novel from what it had become. In 1920 the novel was republished, this time purified of much that Guiches had added for the 1887 publication. But it was too late. After 43 years it was no longer the novel of the moment.

It would be wrong to condemn L'Ennemi completely, however. What General Pierre Keller called Guiches' "goût inné" saved the novel from being submerged. The novel was well received by the critics, but did not fulfil the promise of Céleste Prudhomat in its public success.

In the rewriting, some of Guiches' Flaubertian qualities were lost. The balanced sentence: "Une couleuvre traversa le sentier, avec de frénétiques contorsions et se perdit dans les herbes." (La Bête, p.55), became: "Une couleuvre traversa le sentier, disloquée en d'agiles contorsions." (L'Ennemi, p.97) Instead of the ternary phrase of the original, simple and progressive, the new form is contrived and static. Again, as Chavasseur, with great apprehension, approaches his vineyard to see whether the dreaded phylloxera has yet reached it, the manuscript describes his reaction to the scene:

Oh mon Dieu! Il restait cloué sur place,  
paralysé par un sentiment de terreur religieuse,  
de poignante douleur et d'immense pitié. Puis  
il s'arrachait brusquement à sa contemplation  
baissa les yeux et regarda les Perdigoux. (La Bête,  
p.55)

This simple three-part structure in both these sentences carries the reader forward effectively. The revised version sacrifices the rhythm and the simplicity:

Oh mon Dieu! Et les yeux cloués sur cette formidable éventration des montagnes il restait immobile devant l'épouvante qui venait droit à lui. Enfin, déviant par un lent effort de cette hallucinante contemplation, ses regards s'allongèrent sur les Perdigoux. (L'Ennemi, p.98)

Guiches has here fully exploited the possibilities of verb, noun and adjective to obtain a special effect. The abstract noun, favoured by the Goncourts, abounds. Adjectives, striving to be evocative, make the passage heavy. The verb 's'allongèrent', may have been effective without the other devices he has just used, but it is now only one more in a series of extravagances.

Another casualty of the revised version was some of the technical, scientific description of the original. Chavasseur explains his findings to his fellow wine-growers at their 'cercle':

Le phylloxéra présente deux familles distinctes, le phylloxéra abtère qui pond autour des racines tout le printemps et l'été une trentaine d'œufs jaunes ovales à chaque ponte. Il se féconde par lui-même. L'œuf éclot dans huit jours après leur naissance de sorte que chaque insecte fournit pendant les six mois de sa vie active six à douze millions de sujets. (La Bête, p.105)

Although Guiches was reflecting the great public interest in science and its influence on modern life, as a feature of his novel the matter-of-fact stylistic pattern of the laboratory report had little to commend it. Guiches, in his more natural moments, used language to convey beauty, movement or feeling. It was not in his nature to admit



static, lifeless language. It was also contrary to the creed of artistic writing, according to which negative language was a lost opportunity. Not surprisingly, therefore, this fairly lengthy report was omitted from the 1887 edition.

We might, with more justification, regret the passing of some more striking passages where the refreshing directness of speech originally conveyed more effectively the personality of the character and the mood of the moment. Alfred and Esther, holding hands, talk of going out riding together and getting away from watching eyes. Esther says: "Mais moi je me moque de l'opinion." Alfred replies: "Que nous importe, disait-il, et puis cela ne regarde que nous deux, n'est-ce pas?" (La Bête, p.105) Here, the 1887 edition simply says of Alfred - "il répétait, 'ce sera charmant, charmant'" (L'Ennemi, p.43)

The loss of some simple, unpretentious dialogue seems regrettable when it is replaced by more contrived language. This is not always the case. Often, in order to tighten up the text, Guiches obviously cut out unessential material, as Flaubert did. In the manuscript, Vergougnoux, later to be called Jayan in L'Ennemi, gazes out from the parapet of his house across to Chavasseur's:

Devant la gendarmerie le feu de la Sant-Jean s'éteignait. Ce n'était plus qu'un vaste brasier assoupi dans ces cendres, sur lesquelles passaient des souffles légers emportant des flammèches. Et sur les montagnes aussi, de grandes flambées, qui montaient en colonnes rutilantes, s'étaient affaissées ne dessinant plus qu'un point rouge ainsi que le falot d'un tilbury.

Vergougnoux s'était assis sur un tablement du parapet luisant comme une margelle de puits. Il releva la tête ainsi que s'il sentait passer un regard au-dessus de lui. Sur la façade des

Chalasseur une fenêtre découpait un rectangle de lumière. Il tressaillit et ses yeux restaient attachés sur la flamme de la bougie qu'il voyait vaciller, balançant des ombres sur le plafond. Une tête se dessina, celle d'Esther. Elle était penchée, cachant la lumière et il vit la jeune fille, lisant des lettres, tournant les feuilles et les renfermant dans leur enveloppe. Puis elle étala devant elle un carton qui fit luire l'émail d'une photographie, et, les coudes sur la table, elle resta quelques instants absorbée dans sa contemplation. Ses cheveux défaits voletaient autour de ses tempes, roulaient sur ses épaules, éclatant dans l'ombre qui les voilait. (La Bête, p.69)

The 1887 edition omits the whole of the first part of this and begins:

Il releva la tête. Sur la façade des Chavasseur une fenêtre éclaira son rectangle et le profil d'Esther apparut, nettement dessiné. Elle était penchée, lisant des lettres dont il l'apercevait tourner les feuillets et les renfermer dans leur enveloppe. Ensuite, elle étala devant elle sur un chevalet, fait avec des bâtonnets de paille, un cadre luisant, et, les coudes sur la table, elle s'absorba dans sa contemplation. Ses cheveux voletaient autour de ses tempes, roulaient vers les reins avec de miroitantes lueurs dans l'ombre qui les noyait.  
(L'Ennemi, p.130)

Those who might accuse Guiches of being entirely single-minded in his revision of his manuscript will find little trace of Huysmans' influence on this page. It reveals the self-discipline and painstaking care so typical of Flaubert. We might regret the loss of local colour in the first paragraph, with its Midsummer Day bonfire, the image of the lights on the mountain side glowing like the retreating lamp of a street cab, and the second image of the parapet looking like the kerbstone of a well. But the variation in length and rhythm of the final version, without a hint of Huysmansism, make it infinitely superior. The last sentence has

both the ternary rhythm and the falling cadence used widely by Flaubert.

Guiches had been recommended by Bloy, among others, to rid his work of Flaubert's influence.<sup>42</sup> To follow this advice in order to adopt the style and method of the Goncourts or Huysmans would have meant losing the clarity and directness which were some of Guiches' strongest assets. His own sense of style was generally his best defence against excesses. In L'Ennemi, probably more than any other of his novels, we can see how intent he was on sharpening and extending the tools of his craft. We do not have to look far for the influence of Huysmans and the Goncourts, but it is not all-powerful. We have seen the continuing salutary influence of Flaubert. But Guiches was not one to follow slavishly. While retaining the basic method of the master he does not feel obliged to emulate all his devices. In the passage where he described Esther preparing for bed, the manuscript has:

Il la vit comprimer de ses deux mains sa poitrine pour délayer son corset, puis, la chemise flottante, attachée par ses épaulettes roses, elle s'approcha de la fenêtre, tendit les bras pour ramener les persiennes et la lumière s'éteignit. (La Bête, p.69)

The 1887 edition, however, has:

Puis de ses deux mains elle comprima sa poitrine pour dégraffer son corset et la chemise flottante, attachée par ses bretelles bouclées de nœuds roses, elle s'approcha de la fenêtre, tendit les bras pour ramener les volets. (L'Ennemi, p.130)

The falling cadence at the end has gone.

At other times Guiches combines the inherited with the new. Vergougnoux's relationship with Esther is indicated in the manuscript: "Une amitié s'établit entre eux. Le

matin, lorsqu'elle ouvrait les volets, elle lui envoyait gentiment bonjour de la main et il s'inclinait." (La Bête, p.90) The Flaubertian ternary phrase is retained in the 1887 version, but is rebuilt to take account of the power of the adjective and adverb, which he had just discovered under Huysmans' tutelage: "Une franche amitié s'établissait entre eux, une amitié terrible qui l'entraînait loin des intimes effusions, qui donnait à leurs relations un caractère désespérément fraternel." (L'Ennemi, p.150)

The power of the verb, the adjective and the adverb were, regrettably, to disfigure too many of his pages. On occasion their contribution was not obviously damaging, but the habit was a dangerous one for any writer, since it was tempting to add these ingredients to any passage in the belief that they always had a positive contribution to make. When no special effect was necessary or desirable the practice is obstructive to clear understanding. In the manuscript we read how Chalasseur, in his lessons on vinegrowing to his son, Maurice: "(...) développait ses théories. Il les appuyait de dessins tracés sur un tableau noir." (La Bête, p.45) In 1887 this had become: "(...) et il démontrait ses théories, établissant par des dessins tracés sur un tableau noir la géométrique justesse de ses assertions." (L'Ennemi, p.88) Further on in the same passage: "Une poésie vigoureuse lui colorait la parole." became: "Une poésie tellurienne assaisonnait ses mots."

One of the most dramatic scenes in the novel tells of the death of Rigal, the vineyard owner who had lost everything in the vine plague. With his family, he helps gather

in Chavasseur's grape harvest but finds that he can no longer bear to carry on now that his own vines have been destroyed. He takes a last look at his wife and children, asleep with the other grapepickers in the barn, and then goes off to drown himself in a vast tank of fermenting grape juice. It is an episode which lends itself both to the simple narrative of a tragic event and to the careful evocation of the atmosphere both outside and inside the grape-store. Both the manuscript and the 1887 version give evidence of Guiches' awareness of the possibilities. The rewriting of the novel under Huysmans' influence was not responsible for every case of 'écriture artiste'. The manuscript has:

Les cuves ronflaient, vibraient toutes ensemble dans un grondement de chaussée qui branlait le sol de sourdes trépidations et l'atmosphère de la cave était surchauffée par cette ébullition d'alcool alourdie par l'exhalaison de l'acide carbonique qui oppressait la respiration et troublait le cerveau. (La Bête, p.32)

In the 1887 edition this became:

Les cuves ronflaient, vibraient toutes ensemble dans un grondement de chaussée qui ébranlait le sol. La température était surchauffée d'effluves suffocants, d'une exhalaison d'acide carbonique qui sautait à la gorge, criblait les narines de ses picotements d'ammoniaque, endolissait le cerveau dans une paralysante torpeur. (L'Ennemi, p.75)

The devices are similar in both versions. The abstract nouns, the exploitation of the verb are present in both. In the second version, however, these are reinforced with yet more examples and supplemented by the further exploitation of the adjective. In other parts the opposite occurred. Guiches' innate sense of style prevented the complete domination of

the novel by artistic writing. When describing the general scene, before Rigal enters the grape-store the manuscript has: "des masses grises floconneuses ouataient l'horizon". The 1887 edition has: "De gris et floconneux ballots cernaient l'horizon". Here the adjectives are less obtrusive and the strident "ouataient" has been replaced by the more euphonious "cernaient". Altogether an improvement in the direction of inconspicuous language, contrary to contemporary fashion and at variance with the style of other pages of the novel.

Emile Zola, while praising the simplicity and apparently unremarkable quality of Maupassant's prose which had been so astonishingly successful, made the comment that the success of simplicity did not invalidate more complicated writing which could have equal justification.<sup>43</sup> This comment highlights the contrast between the legacy of Flaubert and that of the Goncourts, between a disciplined purist style and a kind of stylistic self-indulgence, in which neologisms and intense expressiveness by skilful use of new or traditional words tended to go hand in hand with a highly subjective treatment of theme. Zola's comment suggests there is a place for artistic writing. Guiches might be forgiven for taking the view that the tragedy of phylloxera and the resultant struggle for survival was an epic whose qualities could be enhanced by evocative vocabulary. It was only in later years, when the obsession with extravagant words had passed, that the permanent damage was revealed to those whose work had been affected by it. It was, perhaps, unfortunate for these writers that their productive years should have been those when such a devastating and scarring fashion was at its height. There have probably been few other such



times in the history of literature when a short-lived methodology has had such a far-reaching and ineradicable effect.

Rigal's act of suicide was the occasion for Guiches to exploit the verbal possibilities to the full. The manuscript has:

Sur un tonneau Rigal alluma une bougie et, montant sur la plateforme, il la tint un instant au-dessus de la nappe sombre qui se soulevait et moutonnait à grands flots. La flamme vacilla, comme au souffle d'un courant d'air, et s'éteignit. Alors il posa le chandelier près de lui et, enjambant l'échafaudage, s'assit sur le rebord, les jambes enfoncées dans le moût qui déferlait sous lui. Il jaillissait jusqu'à ses genoux. La tête dans les deux mains il balançait tout son corps. Puis, tout à coup, il découvrit son visage. Un râle d'asphyxie lui gonfla la poitrine, lui fit perdre l'équilibre et il chavira, plongea dans cette lie bourbeuse, coula lourdement à fond comme un bloc. Il y eut un remous, un grouillement furieux qui sombra. Le bruit des vagues clapotantes s'affaiblit et subitement s'apaisa. Les cuves avaient repris leur ronflement de chaudières en ébullition. (La Bête, p.32)

The style is simple but active. The sentences are of varied length, appropriate to the steady progress of the narrative or to the suddenness of a new development. The rhythm, without being adventurous, is governed by the same advancing action. The verbs and adverbial phrases are carefully balanced in the first sentence. The ternary rhythm of the second starts and finishes with a finite verb. With the short fifth sentence the rhythm changes. In the sixth the sequence of events accelerates with the rapid succession of main verbs. Finally, the three remaining sentences, of equal length, indicate the progressive return of the vat of grape-juice to its normal state. The passage may be considered to be already adequately provided with effective verbs, as they already dominate the

style. The 1887 version, however, carries this a stage further:

Rigal alluma la bougie et, montant sur la plateforme, il la tint un moment au-dessus de la nappe obscure qui moutonnait, se ridait d'écume et tournoyait en cercles tumultueux. La flamme vacilla, ainsi qu'au souffle d'un courant d'air, et s'éteignit.

Alors il lâcha le chandelier et dans un élan résolu, se hissa sur le bord, la tête en avant. Sa poitrine, soulevée, siffla un râle d'asphyxie. Ses jambes s'agitèrent en une contorsion de culbute et il chavira dans la mare bourbeuse, coulant à fond, d'une verticale tombée de bloc.

Un grouillement se fit, un mascaret de pourpre à vagues déchaînées qui s'apaisèrent, s'abaissèrent et s'aplanirent graduellement. Les cuves avaient repris leur ronflement de chaudières en ébullition.

In the first paragraph Guiches had added two verbs in the description of the vat of fermenting grape-juice. They add conspicuously to the weight of visual and aural effect with the repetition of 'd's and 't's and to the sense of urgency by the use of expressive verbs, nouns and adjectives. Again he has chosen words conspicuous for their sound. The repetition of the 's' in 'sa poitrine, soulevée, siffla un râle d'asphyxie' conveys the noise from the seething cauldron of grape-juice. The 'j' and 'g', the 't's and the 'c's of the following sentence create an impression of anguished and twisting limbs. The sounds are not in themselves objectionable. It is the recherché combinations of words producing islands of contrived artificiality which are a poor substitute for the effective natural style of the manuscript. One further change was the addition of 'dans un élan résolu' which makes it clear that Rigal's was a deliberate act of suicide. The manuscript, which tells us that Rigal lost his balance, leaves this unclear.



In rewriting L'Ennemi Guiches had in mind, as we have seen, the modification not only of his language but, more fundamentally, of the direction of his novel. The placing of all-important emphasis on the epic struggle between man and nature inevitably reduced the role of individual characters. This, in turn, affected their emotions and their language. In the manuscript, Chavasseur makes an impassioned plea to his wife, who has never shared his interest in viticulture, but who, in his moment of anguish covers him with recriminations:

Mais je t'en supplie, dis-moi ce qu'il faut que je fasse. J'ai toute ma vie travaillé pour vous. Les résultats que j'obtenais m'encourageaient et j'ai peut-être trop aimé la propriété. Je ne puis pourtant être responsable du malheur qui nous écrase! J'ai soixante-cinq ans. J'espérais une vieillesse plus tranquille, j'acceptais le plus misérable métier pour ne pas vous voir souffrir. Dis-moi ce qu'il faut que je fasse! Au nom de Dieu, entendons-nous, unissons-nous, luttons tous ensemble pour nous sauver. Mais ne m'accable pas de tes reproches qui finiront par me tuer! (La Bête, p.92)

In the 1887 version this desperate, emotional outburst is toned down and becomes more rational and restrained:

Je ne suis pourtant pas responsable du malheur qui nous écrase! Est-ce que l'on peut prévoir de pareilles calamités? Quel reproche peux-tu m'adresser? J'ai travaillé toute ma vie sans repos. J'avais doublé le vignoble que m'avait laissé mon père (....) Reconnais donc ce qu'elles ont fait pour nous, nos malheureuses vignes! Laisse-moi travailler à les guérir. Dis-moi toi-même ce qu'il faut que je fasse, si tu le sais! Au nom de Dieu, entendons-nous, unissons-nous, luttons tous ensemble, mais, je t'en supplie, ne m'accable pas comme tu le fais! (L'Ennemi, p.154)

The difference here is that Chavasseur's plea is no longer for himself, but for the vines. It is not only a personal conflict for Chavasseur, but a problem of man's

disillusionment with nature, the return for time and devotion given to it, a defence of an inborn loyalty to the soil and at the same time a sense of disorientation at the loss of long-held faith and hopes. In both versions Chavasseur's plea falls on deaf ears, but the amendment, in the 1887 version, to the sentence describing Madame Chavasseur's reaction seems directly ascribable to Huysmans' influence. The manuscript has: "Elle sortit, jetant la porte derrière elle avec un fracas qui ébranla la maison." In 1887 this became: "Elle sortit, jetant la porte derrière elle avec un fracas qui répercutait l'explosion de sa colère dans la sonorité des corridors."

The influence of artistic writing in the novel varies from the slight to the wholly defacing. This affects at times all aspects of the story and its setting. In his account of the plight of the peasants, out of work due to phylloxera, Guiches refers to their misery:

La misère ne les effrayait pas. Ils l'avaient fortement supporté pour embourgeoiser le fils aussi bien que pour nipper de cossus atours la "drolle" destinée à raboter la race par sa féconde éducation. (L'Ennemi, p.142)

This gratuitous use of the recherché adjective in particular occurs in a passage where no special effect is achieved or is desirable. Such artificiality detracts from the other achievements of dramatic action, effective character portrayal and the fundamental accuracy of the setting. It is clear from the manuscript that Guiches had no need to intensify either the resonance or the visual quality of his prose. In his description of the phylloxera pest, Guiches, by the Flaubertian

process of diligent pruning, cut out of his final version the laboratory report on the pest. But in the public lecture on the subject he retains and intensifies the picture of the pest thrown onto the screen in the lantern lecture. The manuscript has:

La silhouette se précisait. Les antennes s'allongeaient, pareilles à des cornes de béliet. Les huit replis du ventre alignaient systématiquement leurs rides mobiles. Les pattes crispaient leurs crochets et la bête clouée au mur emplissait toute la toile de sa masse, poursuivait dans le vide sa lente gesticulation. (La Bête, p.63)

The lifeless laboratory report style is abandoned. The sinister menace posed by the insect is already depicted by means of emotive verbs, "s'allongeaient", "crispaient", "emplissait", "poursuivait", <sup>which</sup> are the kind of suggestive words valued by the Parnassian poets. The rhythm of Guiches' sentences, here as elsewhere, is moulded in the poetic pattern. The evenly balanced periods, growing in length progressively, terminating with the falling cadence of the last clause, successfully convey the menace and mobility of the insect.

In the 1887 version, this rhythmic and lexical pattern is disrupted:

La silhouette sa précisait. Les antennes se déployaient, pareilles à des cornes de béliet. Les huit replis du ventre superposaient leurs rides mobiles. Les pattes crispaient leurs crochets et la bête crucifiée au mur dans son grandissement apocalyptique, semblait poursuivre une harponnante gesticulation. (L'Ennemi, p.120)

Here the verbs, then the adjectives and the abstract nouns, swell into a chorus of verbosity. To this is added biblical vocabulary whose relevance is obscure. Guiches clearly felt the need to intensify the impact of his novel in various ways. Not only did he make stylistic changes and streamline

the work by cutting away elements unnecessary to the principal theme. He also wrote in new passages to reinforce this theme. Thus, although he rejected much of the material concerning Alfred Fonprat's moral decline and disgrace in Toulouse, he consolidated this side of his character in his behaviour in Marçayrac, the scene of the main action. In a passage which does not occur in the manuscript and which has a parallel later in the novel, when Jayan reacts in a similar way towards Esther, Alfred exhibits a strong physical and voyeurist desire for Esther, combined with a determination to corrupt her by lending her sensational books:

Il les choisissait vibrants d'amour et saturés de chair. Avec un judicieux discernement il les cueillait fraîchement fardés sur le trottoir des librairies toulousaines où, disséminés parmi les graves écrits, ils se prélassaient, jupes retroussées, offrant aux flâneurs l'image d'une dame généreusement décolletée. (L'Ennemi, p.37)

The account of Alfred's sexual ambitions regarding Esther is both an exercise in evocative psychology and a compromise with the Zolist doctrine that sexual matters make good literature. To achieve the vibrance that was so much appreciated by Huysmans Guiches was moved to pay special attention to both form and content. The primitive desires of man should be revealed in uncompromising terms. At the same time Guiches, whose characters are built on an analytical psychology, avoids the stark brutality which frequently accompanies such passages:

Sa pensée lui collait l'oreille à la porte de la chambre d'Esther. Il écoutait mentalement le froissement des pages retournées, le silence dévorant, haletant qui remplissait

la pièce. Son hallucination lui faisait percevoir des soupirs, des appels perdus, son nom répété comme une spasmodique invocation. Alors il entra, toujours poussé par son rêve, s'approchait à pas d'ombre, se glissant près de ce corps embrasé, et son imagination ne pouvait aller jusqu'à concevoir le délire des étreintes et l'extase des inévocables possessions. (L'Ennemi, p.37)

Here the style is borrowed, but the psychology is Guiches' own. The surviving manuscript is incomplete, ending as it does with the pilgrimage of Jayan, Esther and Madame Chavasseur to Notre-Dame de l'Ile. We cannot say, therefore, whether Jayan's predatory thoughts about Esther were already included in the original version. If not, then both passages would seem to be added to underline the explicit portrayal in Alfred and Jayan of the forces of corruption which gather round Chavasseur and his family at the moment of disaster. If, as seems possible, Jayan was already envisaged as having corrupting designs on Esther, then this parallel episode about Alfred balances, strengthens and supports the portrayal of Chavasseur's impending encirclement by forces of destruction.

It seems clear, therefore, that the essential theme of Guiches' novel was either modified or reinforced in the course of his rewriting it. The vital link between the natural disaster and the ensuing corruption of the vinegrowing community was probably forged at this stage. Not all the amendments made by Guiches were either disastrous or damaging. Much that he did brought improvements to the earlier version, just as Flaubert had done before him. On the other hand, the unhappy influence of artistic writing, for which Huysmans must bear a large share of responsibility was frequently both obvious and damaging to the text of a fine novel.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. A.A. Greaves, op.cit., pp.25-27
2. Charles Beuchat, Histoire du Naturalisme Français. Paris, Editions Corrêa, 1949, Vol. 2, pp.275-307.
3. René Dumesnil, Le Réalisme, Paris, J. de Gigord, 1936.
4. Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter VIII.
5. Zolist preoccupation with moral degradation as a result of material or hereditary factors, which is the basis of the Rougon-Macquart novels, plays no part in Céleste Prudhomat. Its role is more important in L'Ennemi, 1887.
6. Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter VI, p.28.
7. Ibid, Chapter VIII.
8. René Dumesnil, Gustave Guiches (1860-1939), in Le Bouquiniste Français, 40e année, no. 20, août-septembre, 1960, pp.247-249.
9. Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter VI, p.168.
10. Mercure de France, 15 August, 1935. Vol.262, pp.217-218.
11. Charles Beuchat, op.cit., p.19.
12. Apart from the similarity of subject matter between Céleste Prudhomat and Madame Bovary, Flaubert's treatment of his theme reveals a similar combination of pathos and cynicism.
13. Au Banquet de la Vie, Chapter V, p.133.
14. Céleste Prudhomat, Modern Bibliothèque, A. Fayard, Paris, 1905, p.82.
15. Ibid, p.124.
16. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, La Nouvelle Revue Quatrième Série, T.144-145, Juillet-Octobre, p.40 letter dated 27 June 1883.
17. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, op.cit., p.48, letter dated July 1886.
18. Céleste Prudhomat, Modern Bibliothèque, A. Fayard, Paris, 1905, p.43.



19. Guiches' father was a Royalist and pro-Establishment, a result perhaps of his wife's ancestry and his own employment as a tax inspector. General Keller, who had known Guiches from boyhood, told me that there was strong political rivalry in Albas between Royalists and Republicans and that this had led to the creation of rival choral societies. See Céleste Prudhomat, op.cit., p.42.
20. Céleste Prudhomat, op.cit.
21. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, op.cit., p.48, letter dated June 1886.
22. L'Ennemi, Paris, Librairie Moderne, 1887, p.148.
23. La Terre in Œuvres Complètes d'Emile Zola, Cercle du Livre Précieux, Ed. H. Mitterand, Paris, 1967, vol.5, p.781.
24. L'Ennemi was first published in Le Temps in serial form in 1887 and appeared in book form in June of that year. La Terre was first published in Gil Blas between 29 May, 1887 and 16 September, 1887 and was published in book form on 15 November 1887.
25. Guy Robert, La Terre d'Emile Zola, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1952, p.80.
26. L'Ennemi, 1887, p.100.
27. Guy Robert, op.cit., p.75, note 37.
28. L'Ennemi, p.31.
29. Guy Robert, op.cit., p.406.
30. L'Ennemi, 1887, p.164. Charles Goffic draws attention to indications of Zola's influence in Les Romanciers d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, L. Vanier, 1890, p.29. He is critical of both Guiches and Lucien Descaves for retaining many of the excesses of Naturalism after the manifesto against Zola:  

"M. Guiches et M. Descaves, dont une attitude presque décente légitimait les scrupules, la déclaration signée, n'en conservaient pas moins dans leurs livres tous les vieux procédés de l'école, s'attardaient au moule suranné de la phrase naturaliste, aux descriptions, aux antithèses, aux hyperboles, donnaient dans le trompe-l'œil de l'hérédité, et gardaient ineffaçablement sur eux la dure et rude empreinte du maître qu'ils venaient de renier."
31. La Terre, op.cit., p.934



32. Ibid, p.938.
33. Anatole France, La Vie Littéraire, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1891, quoted by Guiches in Au Banquet de la Vie, pp.226-236.
34. La Terre, op.cit., p.1147.
35. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, op.cit., p.42.  
Letter dated June 1886.
36. Ibid, p.44, letter dated September 1886.
37. Ibid, p.75, letter dated August 1887. Madame Mayot, the present owner of the Chateau de Roussillon, has already restored the outer section of the castle. She was kind enough to tell me of her research into its history when I visited Cahors in 1975. See Appendix D(ix) for a photograph of the castle.
38. Le Banquet, Paris, Editions Spes, 1926, p.66.
39. MS of La Bête, p.13. I am indebted to M. Jean Pagès and Mme Henri Bourboulon for the loan of Guiches' notebooks, and the MS of La Bête. The latter is now in the Bibliothèque Municipale at Cahors.
40. Guiches tells us of Huysmans' lack of sympathy with the church in Le Banquet, p.108: "L'Angélus sonnant l'indiffère. Seul le sonneur le requiert. Moi, l'Angélus me suffit. C'est en cela et sur tant d'autres points que nous différons, lui et moi. Son parti pris de pessimisme et de dénigration, parfois, m'horripile. Ma sourde résistance à sa doctrine secrètement l'irrite."
41. "Mais l'intimité s'est resserrée entre Huysmans et moi. Deux fois dans la semaine, souvent trois, je me rends auprès de lui, au ministère, vers cinq heures, sachant qu'à ce moment est terminée sa journée de travail." Le Banquet, p.97.
42. Le Banquet, op.cit., p.60.
43. Zola's graveside farewell to Maupassant is quoted by Paul Ignotus in The Paradox of Maupassant, London, U.L.P., 1966, p.245: "We must not, of course, attempt to set limits to art; we must accept the complicated, the precious, and the obscure, but it seems to me that these are but the excesses, or, as one might say, the feast of the moment, and that we must always return to the simple and clear, as we return to our daily bread which nourishes us with satiety."

## CHAPTER 3

Novels 1888 - 1914(i) La Pudeur de Sodome (1888): An Excursion into the Past

The novel which followed L'Ennemi was a special limited edition, with an engraving by Félicien Rops as frontispiece, of La Pudeur de Sodome, a Flaubertian reconstruction of the Biblical story of Abraham and Lot and the punishment of the citizens of Sodom for their crimes against God's law. Guiches' motives for choosing this particular story can only be guessed at, but apart from the obvious example of Flaubert's Hérodias in Les Trois Contes the theme of the wrath of God may have been suggested to him by Bloy's Le Désespéré (1886), a violent novel of suffering and death accompanied by religious and mystical visions, which led Guiches to write in Le Banquet: "Que tous soient demeurés insensibles devant l'explosion du plus formidable Dies irae qui ait soufflé sur des âmes humaines, cela, je l'avoue, je ne peux le comprendre."<sup>1</sup> A second inspiration may have been J.K. Huysmans who did not disguise his condemnation of humanity as a lost cause. Not only Huysmans' stylistic influence is visible everywhere in Guiches' version of this biblical story but also the book is dedicated to him.

Guiches' interpretation of the crime of the citizens of Sodom was that they were condemned not simply for their debauchery but for their hypocritical indignation at the indecency of the crimes of which God accused them:

A tous les carrefours des chemins tu as affiché le signe de la prostitution et tu t'es prostituée comme cela n'a jamais été fait, comme cela ne se fera jamais plus. Tu t'es prostituée avec les fils des Egyptiens et tu ne t'es pas rassasiée. Tu t'es prostituée avec les fils des Assyriens et tu ne t'es pas rassasiée. Dans la terre de

Chanaan avec les Chaldéens, tu as multiplié tes fornications... (p.3)<sub>2</sub>

When the people reply "Tes chants nous ravissent, mais tes paroles nous offensent, nos oreilles veulent être respectées." (p.45) Zola might well have felt justified in pointing out in defense of La Terre that this was the attitude of his critics. But Guiches' judgement of the 'pudeur' of Sodom was undoubtedly directed to some extent towards the city of Paris, whose role of a city of pleasure behind a facade of respectability he abhorred.

Ostensibly, however, this is a recreation of the life of the city of Sodom, an attempt to bring to life the ancient activities of its citizens:

Des artisans phéniciens, autour de brasiers, soufflaient des verres à l'extrémité de longs tubes. Près de maçons, gâchant du bitume, des Egyptiens, accroupis au soleil, sculptaient des calcaires, radoubant des planches de sycomore, des menuisiers, avec des épines d'acacia, clouaient sur un momie le couvercle oblong illustré de symboliques légendes. (p.33)

Unfortunately the influence of Goncourt and Huysmans overlays every page. This is how Guiches describes the scene before Abraham's journey into Sodom:

Des configurations nuageuses imageaient l'étendue, l'investissaient de symboles, la chimérisaient en les expressives formes des lignes, en les attitudes des hauteurs, bosses de dromadaires, sphynx accroupis, obélisques de neige et dômes de temples, et caravanes de collines, et aussi l'horizon des terres promises gardés par des campements de montagnes, l'horizon prédestiné qui se prophétisait parmi les buissons ardents du soleil, les exodes et les bondissements des 'In exitu' de l'avenir. (p.3)

And here the scene of debauchery in Sodom:

Plus loin un bosquet impie barra le chemin. Il était planté d'aschéras. Les colonnes phalliques arborisaient l'étendue et symétrisaient, en stériles quinconces, leurs formes offensantes. La nuit haletait dans les artères des futaies compactes, sans entrelacement de rameaux, simplifiées, branchées, érigeant leurs verticales architectures et poussant les ardentes fusées de leurs symboles à des celsitudes de végétaux géants. (p.21)

However heavy and laboured these descriptions may be it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the portrayal of the people of Sodom is inspired by anything other than an observation of the habits of Parisians:

Tous relèvent de l'immarcessible intégrité, de l'implacable rectitude, et si bravement loyaux, et si splendidement irrépréhensibles, et si scrupuleusement justes et si cordialement généreux, ils apparaissent armés contre tout dissident, résolus aux suprêmes rigueurs contre les éprouvés de l'opinion. (p.41)

Remote as it may at first appear from the nineteenth-century scene, Guiches' bible story is clearly a commentary on the contemporary scene as well as an exercise in the use of the 'new style' to recreate an episode of history. Guiches had therefore not turned his back on the social scene, which had hitherto occupied his attention as it did that of his contemporary writers. He had been impressed by Gustave de Malherbe's recommendation that the young generation of writers should substitute "à l'étude exclusive des pourritures sociales, une observation [...] qui ne bannira ni la beauté ni l'élégance" (Au Banquet de la Vie, p.168) and in the limited edition of La Pudeur de Sodome he attempted to combine a study of the "pourritures sociales" without banishing "la beauté". The result is far from elegant, however, due mainly to his obsession with the artistic style of the Goncourts. Little attempt is made to give life to any of the

characters of the story in this general panoramic view of crime and punishment of Sodom.

(ii) L'Imprévu (1890): The Power of the Mind

All Guiches' novels so far had revealed a constant interest in and preoccupation with the human situation, both as regards the social and material environment, and also the behaviour pattern and inherited tendencies of his characters. Unlike Zola's pseudo-scientific approach to heredity, Guiches' interpretation of behaviour was limited to a moderate concept of heredity working in conjunction with environmental factors. Thus Céleste's ambition, anger, frustration and despair are provoked by her inherited ambition to escape from her background and by her rejection at the hands of society. In L'Ennemi, Jayan's character of ruthless ambition and sensuality is, in the eyes of the people of Marcayrac, directly attributable to his father who died in prison for the crime of poisoning. Esther, born simple and honest, like Chavasseur her father, is corrupted by the disastrous effects of phylloxera so that she finally becomes selfish and insensitive, refuses to help her father and scorns even Jayan, whose wife she now is and whose money she squanders.

Guiches' interest in human behaviour led him, as it did others, like Bourget for example, to consider the power of an individual to influence, by his own will and application, both his own destiny and that of others. This kind of pseudo-scientific study, of the effect of one personality upon another, was carried out by Paul Bourget in Le Disciple in 1889. Guiches' novel, on a similar theme, appeared in 1890 with the title of L'Imprévu. Where Bourget showed in his novel the dangers of attempting to direct another's behaviour scientifically, according to the philosophy of positivism, without moral principles, Guiches shows in L'Imprévu how attempts to control one's own destiny and that of others

by calculated determination and denial of moral responsibility can fail abysmally.

L'Imprévu attacks also the motives which govern human behaviour and attitudes under the cloak of sympathy and friendship. The wealthy hero, Léon Dussol, is coolly scientific and calculating and makes no attempt to disguise the utter selfishness of his ambition, unlike those who had offered him help when he first started out on his own:

Grâce à cet esprit de méfiance que je tiens de ma race, à cette perspicacité développée chez les miens par le maniement des affaires commerciales, je découvris, sans peine, les spéculations qui se dissimulaient sous ces chaleureuses marques de sympathie...(pp.2-3)<sub>3</sub>

Dussol's self-examination at the beginning of his career may well have been what Guiches felt about himself:

...l'étude des êtres, l'analyse des actes humains, la recherche des causes qui les déterminent, les conflits dont ils dramatisent l'existence, attiraient ma pensée, tandis que me laissait à peu près insensible l'observation des aspects extérieurs. (p.5)

Dussol chooses a career of letters and confidently predicts that success is merely a matter of deduction: "Le secret fondamental du succès est donc dans cette faculté de prévoir que je résolu de cultiver et de défendre contre toutes les influences qui pourraient l'amoindrir." (p.9)

True to his self-avowed ambition he rejects the entreaties of Adeline, his childhood friend, to remain in Montmorillon, but pretends to give way, persuades her to stay the night and seduces her. He then makes his escape early next morning to Paris. In the course of Dussol's career in Paris, Adeline appears and proclaims herself pregnant by him. She refuses



to leave until her child has been born; then she will go if he wishes, but she is convinced that the power of his own fatherhood will make him love her too. Her stay in Dussol's apartment is a time of increasing torment for Adeline. Dussol refuses to accept her as his wife or to take her anywhere with him. He treats her with growing contempt and inhumanity and scorns her suggestion that she has now become a Parisian whom he can take out and show off. His aim is to drive her out of his home.

An American woman, whom he meets, helps him to make Adeline suffer through jealousy, although the exercise for the American, Mary, is a purely intellectual and disinterested one. As the time for the birth approaches, Adeline begs for his support and affection:

"Léon!" gémit-elle, "épargnez-moi. Je vais souffrir beaucoup. Je veux vous voir, voir votre figure penchée sur moi. J'aurai besoin de serrer votre main. Vous ne pourrez me la refuser. J'aurai plus de courage pour supporter le supplice qui vient..." (p.148)

But Dussol feels no sympathy, only hatred for the suffering she has caused him. He says he will send for a doctor and a nurse but he is going out. With cold brutality Dussol sees her merely as an obstacle in his path:

Alors, d'un mouvement irrésistible, affolé de rage, et qui tendit ses deux bras à les rompre, je l'arrachai de la porte, râlant comme si elle venait de dessouder sa chair. Elle s'abattit et dans sa chute, heurta du ventre l'angle d'une chaise qu'elle renversa, roulant avec elle sur le plancher. Un cri d'atroce souffrance, de surhumaine détresse, d'espoir vaincu jaillit de sa gorge, et sans se relever, [...] elle exhala des gémissements continus.<sup>4</sup>

This portrait of mental cruelty and the resulting physical violence is closely linked to Bourget's concept of the evils inherent in the cold exploitation of one mind by another. Taking, as it does, the form of a confession, the deliberate and cruel exploitation of Adeline by Dussol is even more strongly emphasised. Like Bourget's Le Disciple it is a first-person narrative. In fact, in earlier manuscripts of the novel, the novel was originally presented in the form of a letter entitled Ma Suprême Confession sent posthumously by Léon Dussol to Flavien Logier, a writer he had once met and talked with:

Sans faiblesse comme sans cynisme je raconte mon cœur. C'est, - je ne saurais en douter, - à cette terrible besogne, si témérairement entreprise que je dois la fin dont me séparent des instants comptés avec une cruelle parcimonie. Pardon, mon cher Flavien, pour les audaces, les emportements de passion, les hautains mépris, les sanglots convulsés, les rires stridents et les hurlantes imprécations qui désespèrent ces pages.<sup>5</sup>

In his confession he admits "Sa bassesse originelle, sa primitive abjection." Léon Dussol has the callous insensitivity of many of Guiches' more convincing male characters, like Jacques Mauvalon and Hector Jayan. In this early period of his career the cold calculating mind came more easily from his pen than the gentle and generous spirit. The contemporary spirit of materialism and pessimism is well reflected in his heroes.

What of the heroine then? Céleste Prudhomat was the victim of the social system which denied her the graceful aristocratic life she craved for, and the victim of a class system which regarded her as undeserving of respect and consideration when abandoned by the local squire who had made her his

mistress. On the other hand she was far from being a docile, ingenuous victim. She could be sullen and wilful with her lover, scheming and vengeful when her hopes were threatened, jealous and embittered towards her old school friend, selfish and ungrateful towards her parents, angry, impatient and scornful of those she considered her inferiors, like the old woman who brought messages from Mauvalon and the woman she begged to abort her. She was the instrument of her own downfall, deliberately becoming pregnant by Mauvalon's army friend in a vain attempt to pressurise Mauvalon into marrying her. She emerges, therefore, as a strong character exploding and smouldering in her disasters rather than as a pure and innocent victim abused and ruined through no fault of her own.

Esther Chavasseur begins as the dutiful and favourite daughter of a successful and respected vinegrower. She, too, however, as a result of making friends with the daughters of the aristocracy at the convent school, becomes self-assured and, in the eyes of the country folk, arrogant. Subsequently she is the helpless victim of Hector Jayan's scheming and Alfred Fonprat's betrayals in Toulouse. Her conversion to selfish self-indulgence comes after the father's land is attacked by phylloxera. She then forgets Alfred, flirts with Jayan and finally agrees to marry him. At once, like Delphine Nucingen in Balzac's Le Père Goriot, she is less than generous towards her family, urging Jayan to moderate his generosity towards her brother Maurice. After their marriage she

becomes indifferent to her husband, she makes him end the payments he has been making to her father to help him in the fight against phylloxera and, in her hands, Jayan's fortune crumbles away. The shock of this betrayal by his daughter proves fatal to her father. Not as strongly drawn as Céleste, Esther nonetheless exhibits in the end an unfeminine independence and ruthlessness which are perhaps not too far removed from Céleste Prudhomat.

Adeline, apparently motivated exclusively by love for Léon Dussol, submits with incredible devotion to his cynical indifference. He suspects her of deliberately setting the scene for her own seduction in order to become pregnant and force him to marry her. But her loyal devotion, and the suffering it brings her at his hands, suggest there is no selfish motivation behind any of her actions. Her character is not totally negative however. Although a girl from the provinces, she had been brought up after her parents' death by the Marquis d'Aurilon and his wife and consequently had the good taste and the qualities necessary for graceful living:

Ses doigts effleuraient les choses avec  
une dextérité suprêmement délicate, les  
façonnaient, les faisaient vivantes,  
révélaient, en tout, l'instinct du luxe  
et le sens du décor mondain.

She became, with the passage of time, a Parisian "comme l'éclosion d'une fleur germée dans l'aristocratique intimité de sa race et qui s'épanouissait en trouvant son climat."  
(pp.88-89)

Constantly active, playing the piano, reading, painting, attending concerts and exhibitions, she seems a woman of contrasts. After the birth of the child, which was stillborn,

she refuses to marry Dussol and is indifferent to him although he wishes to repair the harm he has done. She leaves him, disappears completely and after a long search, helped by the American woman, who had become his constant companion, Dussol finds her again, married to his best friend whom he had never allowed her to meet. Her character develops very little. For Dussol she is now totally inaccessible, in love with her husband. It is Dussol's reaction to the situation which occupies Guiches' attention.

Dussol's rich American friend, Mary, is another of Guiches' women characters who dominate, or attempt to dominate, the men in their lives. For her, Dussol's predicament is, from the beginning, an intellectual exercise. Her avowed aim is to escape boredom. She schemes with Dussol to make Adeline jealous. He sees her as seeking a new experience: "un épuisement précoce des sensations normales, un prodigieux ennui de l'existence sédentaire, le besoin d'utiliser une activité à laquelle trop de richesses acquises sans travail fermaient toutes les issues." (pp.134-35) She is not merely a representative of a class of society sated with self-indulgence, but has her origins in the Marquise de Merteuil in Choderlos de Laclos' Les Liaisons Dangereuses: "Rien, she tells Dussol, n'est plus divertissant que les intrigues dans lesquelles on n'est pas personnellement intéressé. Nous connaissons tous les sports physiques. Je songe à lancer un sport sentimental qui serait attractif au moins autant que le tennis." (p.319)

Dussol sees her as his ideal companion: "...elle résumait

pour moi l'idéal d'un amour de rencontre tenant dans un après-midi de soleil" as he first sees her through his window. He believed that "Chaque créature... rencontre en un moment de sa vie, la créature dont l'état d'âme correspond au sien, et qui est conduite vers lui par une irrésistible loi d'attraction." (p.115)

Hers, however, is a disinterested role, unlike Dussol's, who, finding himself rejected by Adeline, schemes to destroy her happiness with Loysel:

Je résolu de démasquer devant Adeline cette faiblesse d'âme qui mieux, peut-être, que le ridicule dont elle pouvait l'excuser, la détacherait pour toujours de Loysel et la ramènerait à moi triomphalement. Je recherchai l'occasion de ce spectacle, dont je réglai la mise en scène et calculai les effets. (p.283)

Jealousy and frustration lead him to think of suicide to achieve his ends, such is his determination to undermine their relationship. His earlier indifference has given way to personal suffering, illustrating the emptiness of his earlier faith in the philosophy of self-determination. In the course of his attempts to vilify Loysel in Adeline's eyes, he attributes to him motives and behaviour which are in fact in his own character and indicate what Guiches had in mind in writing his novel:

Il y a dans tout homme l'instinct de sa domination primitive sur la femme. Cette domination s'exerce par la violence chez les êtres vulgaires, plus proches de la barbarie naturelle. Chez les civilisés, elle se manifeste par une tyrannie plus savante, par une exploitation plus habile. Mais le résultat est le même et, chez les uns comme chez les autres, s'affirme sous des aspects différents, une identique abjection. (p.287)

Dussol's manipulation of Adeline and Loysel fails. His marriage in the end to Mary is the novelist's romantic compromise, the culmination of a strain of romanticism which runs through the novel countering the thread of cynical calculation which begins so strongly. Dussol acknowledges that his failure stems from his mistaken belief that he could escape from the consequences of his first night with Adeline.

Guiches' novel is a meeting place of influences. The new interests of the psychologists like Bourget in examining the role of reason without morality is present, but so too, and perhaps more so, is Stendhal's Julien Sorel who exploited others in a life of calculated ambition, although Guiches' Dussol is less shrewd and much less well-drawn than his Stendhalian counterpart. Moreover, behind the influence of these two writers lies that of Choderlos de Laclos whose Vicomte de Valmont and Marquise de Merteuil exploit their victims just as Léon Dussol and Mary attempt to exploit Adeline.



(iii) Un Cœur Discret (1892): The Individual - a Victim of Society

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The strain of romanticism which blurs the edges of Guiches' more satirical vision of human behaviour, appears again in Un Cœur Discret (1892). This is the story of the son of a M. Mazels, a former accountant in the town of Flottes<sup>6</sup> in Quercy. The family is kind and hospitable to a new postmistress in the town, who comes from an old and wealthy Quercy family, ruined by swindlers. Her parents having died, she, sensitive but practical, takes up a career with the Post Office. But her path is far from easy and she feels excluded from ordinary society. André Mazels falls in love with her and she with him. However, André has to go to Paris to continue his law studies. His letters become less frequent and, after repeatedly sending him money to help him with his political ambitions, the postmistress discovers that he has intended all along to marry someone else and now finds her an embarrassment. Fortunately, his closest friend and adviser, Bastid, who is wealthy but content to live in Flottes, helps her and marries her.

This may be a story he had written or at least conceived earlier, as it appears to have more in common with Céleste Prud'homme than with L'Imprévu (1890). Claire de Gizols, the postmistress, was not, however, of humble birth, as was Céleste. Her father had spent his fortune on industrial and agricultural eccentricities. He was persuaded to invest in experimental ventures which came to nothing and proved to be a swindle. This finally resulted in the mother's death and the father's suicide, all the property having been mortgaged. Claire was therefore left with neither parents nor

money. Her education, like Céleste's, in a religious boarding school and her subsequent career in the Post Office show how her sensitive, affectionate but practical nature is repeatedly humiliated, first at the Dames du Saint Sacrement and then in her first appointment where she feels the hostility of the townspeople. Her mental suffering reaches such a pitch that she has to give up her post and retire into solitude.

This theme of finding solitude to escape from the cruelty and treachery of society is one which is taken up more strongly in Philippe Destal (1892). Guiches was clearly interested in the plight of the sensitive individual in a society preoccupied with the importance of caste and wealth. Although, initially, Claire de Gizols had the advantages of both money and a good family, the loss of these things put her on the same footing as Céleste Prudhomat and left her at the mercy of a corrupt and selfish society.

Guiches' description of the people of Flottes is as mockingly satirical in its way as Flaubert's portrayal of Yonville-l'Abbaye. Simbels, the chemist, was obsessed with pyrotechnics, producing firework displays for important baptisms and marriages. The priest, Abbé Valadier, hated music and had turned down the offer of a harmonium by a respected member of the community. Collonges, an old surgeon in his dotage was sought after in local society because of his rambling imagination. The local tax-inspector's wife was deaf but had a charming voice and liked to sing. Mazels,

himself, we are told "...possédait le don précieux d'exprimer avec éloquence des sentiments qu'il n'éprouvait pas, et que seulement il s'imaginait ressentir.." (Chapter I)<sup>7</sup> in addition to which he was avaricious, even towards his son.

In the town of Mauroux, to which Claire had been appointed to her second post as postmistress, far from finding a staid respectability, she discovered that she was the object of amorous attentions from some of the most notable married dignitaries, receiving letters and declarations of love, under fictitious names, from, among others, the tax-inspector and a retired judge. These strictures on contemporary morality find further expression in Guiches' collections of short stories, Au fil de la Vie (1895), and La Femme du Voisin (1898), in which marital infidelity provides the opportunity for a good deal of penetrating wit at the expense of the accepted code of behaviour in both Parisian and provincial society.

Un Cœur Discret was the second of Guiches' novels in which he treated the theme of a young man leaving the provinces to make his fortune in Paris. The precedences for this subject in Balzac (Eugène Rastignac) and Flaubert (Frédéric Moreau) are perhaps more an indication of the continuing topicality of this theme than a precise influence on Guiches. The direct inspiration came from Guiches' own career, as did the circumstances surrounding the young man's departure for the capital. André Mazels was 20 and had just finished the first year of his law studies. His parents were reluctant to let him go to Paris to continue his studies as they were afraid of the effect of Paris life on him. André felt the same "ennui profond" that Guiches himself felt at exactly the same age. Moreover he was bitter about the effects of having

old parents:

Il avait compris, de bonne heure, quels inconvenients cruels résulteraient de la distance d'âge qui le séparait de ses parents. Tout en ayant pour eux le plus fervent attachement, il abhorrait leurs idées, leurs habitudes, leurs goûts. (Chapter I)

André was kept away from his school friends. The only toys he had were given him by friends of the family. One day he was shocked to hear that his father was fifty-four, but Mazels replied that he was the same age as the Emperor. Mazels' avarice may not have been inspired by Guiches' father, but his age certainly was. Joseph Guiches was born in 1808, the year of the birth of Napoleon III. Gustave certainly felt a gap of ideas between them and certainly resented the same lack of confidence in him which delayed his departure to a new life in Paris.

In the same vein André complained to Claire about his parents:

J'ai été élevé à douter de moi-même, et comme j'avais, de naissance, de grandes dispositions à ce genre de modestie, vous pouvez vous figurer à quel degré il a été développé ce système d'éducation. (Chapter IV)

The same disaffection which existed between Guiches and his father is also portrayed here:

J'ai été depuis l'enfance opprimé par l'égoïsme inconscient de mon père. Je mets ma mère hors de cause, car elle n'a d'autre volonté que celle de son mari. Mon père a éteint, peu à peu, toute la jeunesse qu'il y avait en moi. Il n'y a jamais eu entre nous cette franchise de relations qui existe entre des parents plus jeunes et leurs enfants. (Chapter IV)

Harsh words of recrimination; and Huysmans may be forgiven

for believing, in 1894, two years after the publication of Un Cœur Discret, that Guiches would not feel unduly upset by the news of his father's death.

Flottes, too, was undoubtedly Albas, where the Guiches' house, like the Mazels', overlooked the square, and from which Guiches, like André would have watched the café close at 10 o'clock and the drunkards being turned out. The description of the scene during André's walk with Claire recaptures one which would be familiar to the young Gustave:

Le soleil déclinait vers Combes. Des maisons juchées sur les cimes des montagnes flambaient de toutes leurs vitres dans les vapeurs mauves du couchant. De la plaine, des vallons... s'entendaient le roulement cahoté des charrettes et les sonnaillles rythmant le pas à pas des boeufs. Des nuées de papillons nocturnes voltigeaient à la surface de la rivière. (Chapter IV)

Against this background of personal and social reality there runs a strain of romanticism which seems to hark back to Madame Bovary in its contrasting of reality with romantic hopes, but which again, as in L'Imprévu, fails to carry its pessimistic message through to the end. No doubt Guiches was tiring, as others were, of the unrelieved gloom and pessimism of the Naturalist novels.

Claire's experience of receiving love letters from respectable married men, together with her reading of romantic novels, led her to believe that love lay behind everything:

Méditées à chaque instant dans la solitude de sa chambre, surexcitées à la lecture des romans de passion que lui prêtait la femme de l'ancien juge, Mme Audibert, ses convictions nouvelles s'exaltèrent et elle souffrit de se sentir mise hors la loi commune par une rigueur exceptionnelle du sort. (Chapter III)

Her sensitivity to passion led her to sense which of the

letters she handled in her job were love letters and it was through this obsession that she found her satisfaction until she met André. Her final rejection by him in favour of a career in politics is a familiar theme in the novels of the nineteenth century where sentiment and devotion are eternally sacrificed on the altars of ambition and self-interest. Perhaps Guiches felt that it was equally realistic that a rich and dependable friend should sometimes be at hand to compensate for life's disasters and to fill the gap left by the unfaithful lover.

(iv) Philippe Destal (1892): The Plight of the Social Exile

Jules Huret's inquiry into the state of Naturalism in 1891, Enquête sur l'Evolution Littéraire, reproduces a letter from Guiches together with some introductory remarks in which Huret indicates the direction that he believed Guiches' work was taking:

Ses nouvelles œuvres, L'Imprévu entre autres, le montrent préoccupé d'analyses psychologiques, et s'orientant dans l'art à la suite de maîtres moins populaires et plus raffinés, et particulièrement de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. (p.254)<sup>8</sup>

Guiches denies in his autobiographical work, Le Banquet (1926), that Villiers ever influenced him, although he had great affection for him and deeply mourned his death in 1889. He calls him both "un fanatique rêveur" and "un railleur, qui protège son grand frère idéaliste contre les attaques et les profanations de la réalité." (p.39) Neither of these qualities had so far shown themselves in Guiches, whose work lacked both the idealism and the bizarre humour of Villiers. Nevertheless there was some affinity between them and it was true that Guiches was turning his attentions more and more to an examination and analysis of the desperate position of the sensitive individual and his prospects for survival or escape in a society in which ideal love had no place.

Guiches' letter to Jules Huret points out the different directions being taken by the Naturalist writers and their contemporaries. He makes a plea for writers to be admired for themselves without any idea of their belonging to a school of literature:

Cette idée d'école tend à disparaître. Les groupes, en effet, ne cessant de se multiplier,



un jour viendra sans doute où chaque écrivain formera son groupe à lui tout seul, réalisant le maximum de la personnalité. Ainsi serait accomplie non pas l'évolution littéraire, mais une révolution complète dans les idées reçues, ce qui, à mon très humble avis, serait encore mieux. (p.257)

The implication is clearly that he does not wish to be given a particular label himself, nor does he wish to be excluded from any acknowledgement or recognition of qualities which such a label can bring. One does not have to be a trained psychologist to write a psychological novel:

Chaque écrivain est psychologue à un degré plus ou moins intense proportionné au développement de ses facultés de pénétration, mais de ce que beaucoup d'entre eux, soit par scepticisme, soit par système, soit encore par défaut d'esprit philosophique, ne transforment pas leurs observations en lois générales, il ne s'ensuit pas pour cela qu'ils ne soient psychologues au même titre que les psychologues de profession. (p.256)

In his next novel Philippe Destal (1892) Guiches takes his psychological analyses a stage further. This is a complex novel in three parts preceded by a prologue, and tells the strange story of an extraordinarily intellectual and solitary man in whom qualities of sensitivity, mysticism and idealism are so highly developed that he rejects the standards of the outside world and reveals a physical inability to withstand the psychological pressures which he imposes upon himself. Although reminiscent, in some respects, of Huysmans' A Rebours (1884), with its genealogy of Jean des Esseintes and his subsequent life of seclusion, Guiches does not take up the bizarre, sensual experimentation of Huysmans' hero. Philippe Destal is born a recluse and is a victim of the forces for

good and evil in society which he invites into his seclusion. The prologue explains the exceptional atavism of the main character and the mystical heredity which is perpetuated in him. It relates the story of his grandfather, a successful Cahors merchant, who bought an old feudal château in Quercy, in which to relive the sensual and frivolous life he had led in Paris in his youth. He married the daughter of his companion in debauchery. After his death, his son, Jean Destal, brought in a new era of idealism, turning the château into a mystical retreat, in which he, his religious wife and his brother, a priest, sought fulfillment in an extraordinary life of prayer, meditation and self-discipline. Jean, like his father, had spent some years in Paris: "(...) séjour tourmenté d'amours fantasques, passionné d'étude, ravagé par le despotisme de la femme, reconquis par le sentiment religieux."<sup>9</sup> Jean Destal "était d'une souveraine laideur. Le visage s'effilait en un ovale démesuré. Les chairs étaient molles et la peau faisait corps avec l'ivoire de l'ossature," (p.7) was tormented by sexual longing which found no response in his wife: "Les sens restaient indociles et s'insurgeaient sous les lanières dont il les flagellait." (p.10) Driven, by desire, to spying on his wife, Rose, and lying in wait for her, he rarely found any response in the angelic and indifferent figure he encountered. Philippe Destal was the fruit of one of the rare occasions when passion triumphed. Jean Destal, who clearly inherited something of his father's sexual appetite, took a special delight in seducing his wife "la servante du Seigneur", whose body bore all the signs of extreme self-discipline:

Une chair (...) lacérée de pénitences, glorifiant, à travers les stigmates de son martyre, la douloureuse conquête de sa volonté. C'était un enroulement de spirales, une géographie de torture où se distinguaient la radiation écarlate des plaies récentes et les lignes cuivrées, les larges disques bleuâtres des blessures cicatrisantes.(...) Rose (...) s'exhibait saintement avec un sourire qui disait, "Voici la servante du Seigneur." (p.14)

Jean's reaction reminds us of Hector Jayan's desire to defile Esther Chavasseur:

la séduction du sacrilège devenait si pressante que la pensée de dérober à Dieu ce sanglant sacrifice d'humanité dominait tous ses ravissements. (p.14)

Even then, however Rose mutters a Latin prayer which re-establishes the distance which separates them. And so Philippe Destal's conception is attended by both self-denial and sexual aberration in a rite of religious sacrifice. "Ainsi fut conçu Philippe Destal". (p.15)

The importance of this scene, as of the whole prologue, lies in the powerful and conflicting forces, the uncompromising sense of purpose and destiny which is Philippe Destal's inheritance and the equally dominant adoration of the ideal woman. Two significant dicta are given in the prologue, both representing the credo of Jean Destal. The first is a quotation from Saint Anselme: "Croyez d'abord, puis cherchez, si bas vous paraît, les raisons de votre croyance." (p.8)

This is clearly a rejection of positivism and its believers:

Ils manoeuvrent des phrases qui ont les apparences de l'idée, les juxtaposent, les rivent les unes aux autres, indissolublement, leur semble-t-il. Et puis, ils proclament que leur doctrine est établie, qu'elle est la seule valable, qu'elle est la vérité, l'unique vérité! Or, voici qu'un importun survient, s'amuse à révéler les tares des ordures et, d'un tour de main, fait sauter les écrous. (p.8)

The second dictum, displayed in the Destals' bedroom, is from Saint Jerome: "La ville est ma prison, la solitude mon Paradis." (p.13) This is another rejection of the orthodox world outside, a rejection of compromise with life, a recommendation for seeking fulfilment in a life of solitude. Having portrayed the agony of the individual in eternal conflict with society in his previous novels Guiches now considers the position of the sensitive individual, who, having rejected the artifices of society, tries to find happiness in private.

The novel then relates the life of Philippe Destal. His father died before he was born and his mother died giving birth to him. Thus Guiches ensures that his hero is alone in the world, developing into manhood in a cloistered environment, brought up by his uncle in the life of prayer and discipline that had existed when his parents were alive. The boy is extraordinarily frail and sensitive. He grows to hate his uncle and is horrified by pictures of his parents. His imagination develops to a high degree and he is affected by both religious emotion and an interest in the opposite sex: "le regard surexcité par les jambes nues des femmes occupées à savonner des linges au bord d'un étang."

When the suggestion is made, at the age of fifteen, that he should be sent to Paris to complete his education, he collapses in a violent fit of anger and has to be strapped to the bed for a few days to avoid injury to himself. The intensity of this physical reaction is significant. It is clearly the result of inherited characteristics and also presages unusual sensitivity and reaction to events and the pressures of the world. His imagination is reinforced by random reading in the library of the château of a wide

range of books which include the Bible, philosophers of the eighteenth century, Manon Lescaut, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Shakespeare, Plato, Scott and Dumas, and "...la pensée de la femme naissait." (p.27)

Attempts to introduce Philippe into society in order that he may choose a wife have a predictable result. He is shy and awkward. None of the girls compared with one he had seen momentarily a short while before and who had become for him the girl of his dreams. He finds the girls' mothers scheming and ambitious. He also dislikes the attitude to life of the young men, which, according to him, consists of first dissipation, followed by marriage, then work and intrigue to further personal ambitions, followed by pleasure in old age. He finally finds pleasure, however, in his isolation because it allows him to observe people and to classify them:

"...trouvant un plaisir dont il n'avait pas soupçonné l'intensité à recueillir et à classer ses observations (...) "La contemplation," se disait-il, "est la vie même." (p.41)

This leads to a return to solitude and isolation and a powerful concentration on the exercise of the intellect: "à ce degré qu'il pouvait faire naître une sensation douloureuse sur une partie de sa personne en fixant sur ce point toutes les forces de son attention." (pp.42-43) The growing desire for love, as yet unrequited, is Destal's quest for what he sees as the formula for happiness: "une perpétuelle ivresse du cœur, de l'esprit et de la chair dans cette entente complète de deux âmes qui établit le silence des ravissements parfaits." (p.43)

This harmony, as we know, his parents had been unable to

achieve, but Philippe is more fortunate. He finds it in Adrienne, the daughter of an archeologist, who visits the château and becomes his ideal partner.

The character of Adrienne is rather superficial.<sup>10</sup> She marries Philippe, against her father's wishes as he had been dependent on her. She also warns Philippe against her brother, who has designs on Philippe's fortune. Now she devotes herself entirely to Philippe and together they pursue their quest for ideal happiness.

Before their wedding night Philippe's apprehension again betrays his inheritance:

Ses yeux exprimaient, en même temps qu'une crainte religieuse, toute l'ardeur de son désir. Son cerveau s'enfiévrâ. Il se représenta des enivrements tels que, sans doute, ils en inventeraient, mais se reprenant bientôt, il voulut chasser ces pensées qui souillaient la pauvre tête de son amour. (p.81)

The realisation of his hopes proves to be precarious, however. Adrienne skilfully and devotedly strives to keep him happy but the physical limitations of their desires make ultimate happiness impossible.

At this point, after a year of marriage, Adrienne has a fatal collapse and dies of an aneurism, the first time Philippe and she are apart. Guiches intervenes at this point, as Balzac did on occasions in his novels, to point out how much harder unexpected misfortune is to bear, particularly for a few who are particularly susceptible:

L'infiltration [de la douleur] se fait lentement. Elle gagne le cerveau, y incruste le souvenir, la pensée fixe qui absorbe toutes les autres, et à chaque heure, tout se corrode, tout s'émiette jusqu'à la dissolution finale dans la folie ou la mort. (p.103)

Here Guiches prepares us for the ultimate disintegration of Philippe Destal, physically and mentally, due to the loss of



the unique happiness to which he had committed his life. Destal's determination never again to make himself dependent on a single human being leads him back to Paris and affords Guiches the opportunity to give an account of Parisian society in the 1890s.

Guiches, a regular contributor to Le Gaulois, Le Figaro, Gil Blas and L'Echo de Paris, over a period of twenty years, from 1892 to 1913, was a shrewd and witty commentator on the Paris scene. In this novel he tells us that Philippe's ideas of a leisurely, idle Parisian society gleaned from reading Balzac and Stendhal, were out-of-date:

Tout cela n'existait plus. Les hommes de loisir lui parurent immensément occupés. Les uns parcouraient l'océan sur leurs yachts, les autres luttèrent de vitesse, à cheval, entre Paris et Saint-Petersburg, quelques-uns exploraient le Thibet... La jeune société se composait d'athlètes, d'enragés sportsmen masculins et féminins. (p.110)

In his analysis of Parisian life, Guiches diagnoses an uneasy rebellion against materialism. There was

un déchaînement de toutes les souffrances physiques, de toutes les misères des pauvres, de toutes les convoitises humaines contre l'inexorable despotisme de l'argent... Une mystérieuse inquiétude se mêlait aux plaisirs. Tout se poussait à l'extrême. Les vices s'accroissaient dans la recherche de l'horrible ou se quintessenciaient à des singuliers raffinements... Les imaginations désorientées se rejetaient vers le mysticisme, rétrogradaient vers un catholicisme primitif, s'enfonçaient dans un matérialisme scientifique ou s'affolaient dans la magie. Tout cela composait pour une intelligence curieuse un délectable ragoût. (p.111)

Since Philippe Destal is seeking a purpose in life to which he can devote himself, Guiches is able to consider also the contemporary political scene. Here he sees the struggle between Labour and Capital as an insoluble one, in which,



however, he writes rather cynically of both, while predicting the end of bourgeois rule. Guiches refrains from 'taking sides' in the battle. He was not interested in politics and his objectivity leads to a similar but more extensive study of the industrial and political life of the country in his later novels Le Tremplin and La Tueuse, which are a follow-up of a belief expressed here. This is that a politician who hoped to solve the social problem needed special qualities:

l'ambition d'une fortune ou un bel amour pour l'ouvrier, amour qu'il ne pouvait avoir, car il considérait celui-ci comme ayant en germe et devant exercer, après sa victoire certaine, les mêmes "abominations" qu'il reprochait à ses ennemis actuels. (p.116)

In this survey of national life Guiches also refers to the literary scene and, in similar terms to those used in his memoirs he comments on the cut-throat competition: "On s'y disputait avec une animosité meurtrière l'avancement." More interestingly, he refers also to: "Les artifices littéraires en vogue, la grossièreté des talents démocratiques et la quincaillerie de mots creux chère aux professeurs d'écriture"..." While innocent of the "grossièreté", "la quincaillerie de mots creux" had featured in more than one of Guiches' novels.

The last part of the novel relates how Philippe Destal, in an effort to recapture his earlier happiness, marries Laure, who closely resembles Adrienne. Guiches' plan of the novel, originally to be entitled A Genoux<sup>12</sup> briefly indicates the strange events of this attempt to "ressusciter l'âme de la morte dans sa second femme." He writes here of the failure of what he calls "cette transfusion" owing to the resistance of his second wife:

Il ne réussit pas à opérer cette transfusion et ne peut obtenir qu'une similitude physique sans parvenir à détruire en cette seconde femme, épousée dans ce seul but, une personnalité hostile et qui se révolte contre ces expériences d'évocation et cette persistance du souvenir.<sup>13</sup>

The climax of this last part of the novel is reached when Fernand, the adventurer brother of his first wife, returns as a guest and Laure falls in love with him. The unexpected culmination of Philippe Destal's quest for happiness comes when he surprises his wife and brother-in-law in adultery and relives, through the cries of passion which escape the lips of his second wife, the joy he had known with his first wife. In order not to lose this new-found happiness he encourages their adultery and wanders through the corridors of the château at night, listening for these familiar echoes of the past from outside his wife's bedroom.

Not for the first time in Guiches' work, this part of the story also reveals an affinity with Laclos' Les Liaisons Dangereuses. The calculated exploitation of an unsuspecting victim by the ruthless scheming of a man and a woman who are the products of nineteenth century society is as much a realistic portrayal of modern morality as was Laclos's over a century earlier. Rebelling finally against her husband's plea to be allowed to call her Adrienne, Laure sets out to destroy her husband by destroying his sanity. To this end she seeks to disturb his mind without respite, hoping to have him declared insane. The arrival of Fernand just as she is beginning to make Philippe lose control of himself brings her an ally of even greater ruthless cunning. The attraction they feel for one another is founded on hypocrisy

and cunning. Guiches again interposes a direct comment on contemporary society:

C'est la tristesse de notre époque, cette oppression des sentiments par la crainte de la médiocrité dans l'existence matérielle. Les folies d'amour d'autrefois nous sont interdites. Ceux qui naissent ambitieux et sans fortune, - on naît beaucoup ainsi depuis longtemps - peuvent espérer toutes les jouissances, excepté celle de cœur. (p.218)

Laure's infatuation with the arrogant and apparently indifferent Fernand indicates the brittleness of contemporary values, the rejection of traditional standards of morality, the idolisation of immorality and selfishness:

Car c'est ainsi qu'elle aimait. Fernand n'était pas celui qu'elle eût épousé, mais il était l'amant, cet amant adoré à cause même de sa bassesse et pour lequel sa plus délectable jouissance ne pouvait qu'être de ruiner à grands coups celui qui l'avait enrichie. Elle l'aimait jusqu'à s'enivrer de son avilissement. (pp.222-23)

This is a curious reversal of her attitude to her husband whom she hates and despises and to whose suffering she is as indifferent as Fernand appears at first to be indifferent to her, an indifference which excites her passionate admiration. As elsewhere in contemporary literature, close relationships in the novels of Guiches are frustrated by the reluctance on the part of one partner to surrender or compromise individuality or self-interest. Characteristically in Guiches' critical portrait of society, Laure's submission to Philippe Destal is a sacrifice made on the altar of cunning and exploitation.

The irony of Philippe Destal's final word "Merci!" spoken before he dies to his wife and her lover, is an indication that the only element of value in their world, the strange happiness that he has found again in their treachery, is something of which they are completely unaware. When they discover

that he has left all his property and money to Laure they do not trouble to try to understand the final word of the man whose life had been devoted to achieving the least material and the least accessible goal in the contemporary world, happiness of the soul

Guiches' synopsis of the novel<sup>12</sup> outlines a different ending in which Philippe Destal has a vision of the future where souls meet up again. He, therefore, accepts meantime: "d'aimer cette femme qui symbolise l'existence moderne pour mériter plus sûrement la morte qui est l'existence idéale, le retour à l'éternité." These words were underlined by Guiches. In changing this ending, Guiches partially curbed his romantic tendency to end on a note of optimism for the future. Moreover, such a vision of life after death was alien to Guiches' central preoccupation, which was with man's role in society and with its practical consequences.

(v) Short Stories (1895-1910): The Contemporary Social Scene

By 1895 Guiches was turning his thoughts to the theatre, which affected his other writing in two ways. Firstly, the friendship and encouragement of Maurice Donnay (1859-1945) and Lucien Guitry (1860-1925) gave him every incentive to persevere with his ambitions to write for the theatre. In November 1895 Guitry promised that Snob would be performed at the Renaissance theatre with himself in the title role, although, as yet, only the outline of the plot was clear in Guiches' mind. The result was that Guiches gave up writing novels for a time. Secondly, contemporary marital problems and attitudes occupied his attention in both his theatre and the short stories and 'nouvelles'.

Guiches had married Jeanne Dumay (1858-1949), the daughter of a Paris gentlemen's outfitter, in 1881 and their daughter Marguerite was born on July 14, 1883. By 1895, after fourteen years of marriage, his daughter was twelve. It was a happy home. Guiches relates in Le Spectacle<sup>14</sup>, and Marguerite Guiches confirms<sup>15</sup> how Lucien Guitry used to bring his children Léon and Sacha to play with Marguerite while he and Guiches talked about their plays. Guiches' stories and plays on the theme of marital conflict and infidelity were not, therefore, the result of his own experience, but of his shrewd and critical observation of the contemporary scene both as a novelist and as a regular contributor to Gil Blas, Le Gaulois, Le Figaro and L'Echo de Paris.

Stories of wives caught in adultery abound in Au Fil de la Vie (1895), La femme du Voisin (1898), and Trop de Zèle

(1898). Out of the fifteen stories in the first collection, nine tell of unfaithful wives, as a result either of wife-neglect (Mésaventure d'un Mari), of the fashionable disregard for the sanctity of marriage (Mésaventure d'un jeune homme, Exigences Intolérables) or from the timeless eccentricities and obsessions of human beings which divide man and wife (Féroacité d'un chien, Impatience d'un commissaire), or create a situation where the husband is a willing cuckold (Un homme de campagne, La serviabilité, Légèreté d'une Jeune Femme, and Quoi de neuf).

Trop de zèle (1898), one of the longer stories, describes the parents' difficulties in finding a suitable husband for Emmeline Galessit, daughter of provincial nobility. Just as Philippe Destal had found it impossible to choose a wife in Paris, so Emmeline's father's quest for a son-in-law was in vain:

Ce monde qu'il avait connu si peu accessible était assez étrangement mêlé! L'industriel y florissait, le juif y spéculait, l'Américaine y épousait et les rastas eux-mêmes, les noirs rastas des Républiques du Sud, y sévissaient. Les idées y étaient d'un modernisme terriblement avancé. La mère s' alarma des allures indépendantes des jeunes filles et l'argot des jeunes cercleux révolta Galessit. Il rentra navré, inquiet sur l'avenir d'une telle société.<sup>16</sup>

Jacques de Grammorin, whom she eventually marries, is a provincial nobleman, ignorant and coarse, urged upon her by her parents and totally unsuitable. She hates him:

"Vous êtes dégénérés au moral et déformés au physique," she says of the declining nobility, "et je ne connais pas un fils de bourgeois qui ne soit plus distingué que vous par l'intelligence, par le cœur et même par les traits!"<sup>16</sup>

As a result Jacques goes away for a time and in his absence

she is unfaithful to him, an experience which finally persuades her that she was wrong to scorn her husband.

Le But (1910), tells a similar story of marriage among provincial nobility and the wife's infidelity with a close friend of the husband's, while the latter, in financial difficulties, goes away to make another fortune for her. Here again Marceline turns against her husband, Hubert, knowing nothing of his reasons for going. When he returns the friend is unmasked and rejected by them both.

Gradually the stories were, however, becoming less tight and less realistic in their attack on contemporary manners. Bonne Fortune (1905), is set in Quercy and tells the story of Philippe Dussol's love for a wild, unsophisticated country girl, for whom he rejects his sophisticated society mistress Henriette de Tour. The latter, however, does not accept defeat and attempts to establish her own authority in their house. This portrait of marital conflict and the machinations of the high society woman is here off-set by Guiches' romantic affection for the simple country girl: "C'est comme une plante sauvage, poussée on ne sait comment dans les ruines de ce château. C'est une petite personne brune et nerveuse, qui a un peu l'air d'une gitane lâchée sur la route par sa tribu."<sup>17</sup>

Un Monsieur très bien (1910), set in Normandy and Paris, is a modern society affair, involving Parisian artists and writers and deals once again with a husband and wife whose marriage is a failure. François Desclos is willing to divorce his wife Henriette, provided her lover, Jacques d'Argent, marries her. Desclos is himself in love with Pauline Clermain,



a sensitive and unsophisticated artist, but intelligent and independent. In this story Guiches, through the character of Desclos, gives what are possibly his own views on marriage:

Chaque femme est née la ménagère d'un homme.  
Et il ne faut pas mépriser ce mot! C'est  
votre plus beau titre. Il n'y a pas que le  
pot-au-feu matériel dans un ménage! Il y en  
a un autre qui n'est pas moins "alimentaire"!  
C'est la mise en commun des joies, des peines,  
des espérances! Et c'est sur celui-là que  
veille la ménagère, la femme qu'il faut admirer,  
celle qu'il faut aimer...<sup>18</sup>

Desclos is here speaking as a man whose wife had betrayed him many times and who had long since forfeited any right to his affection, but Guiches himself seems here to be placing the main responsibility for a happy marriage on the wife and yet allocating to her a role which was soon to become out-of-date in the twentieth century. This story was based on his highly successful play Chacun Sa Vie (1907) and illustrates the kind of theme which was very popular and considered to be rather daring in the theatre, as well as in the short story.

(vi) Guiches' Prose, 1886-1892

The characteristics of Guiches' prose were fairly clearly defined by the time his fifth major novel, Philippe Destal, was published in 1892. Discounting the temporary fashion of artistic writing, Guiches had found a style which was to continue to distinguish his prose throughout his life.

Unlike some writers whose temperament or employment kept them for much of their time away from the society of their literary peers, Guiches was one who lived in close and constant contact with the literary world.<sup>19</sup> He met many writers while at the Librairie de la Presse, at the cafés frequented by them and, inevitably, at the literary evenings which he attended at the Goncourts and elsewhere. He was a close friend of a number of writers, especially Maurice Donnay, Henri Lavedan, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, and J.K. Huysmans.

It is quite natural therefore that his work should reflect the developing ideas of both contemporary literature and contemporary society, at all events until the outbreak of war in 1914.

From the first, he was attracted by writing as a challenge to record and recreate, through the power of the word, the essential truths of human beings as he saw them. His early days in Paris were, as for many writers before him, a time of searching for his literary soul. He found it, with Céleste Prudhomat, which set the basic pattern of the subjects and style of his writing for the next forty years and although it can be said that his later work did not fulfil the high hopes inspired by Céleste Prudhomat and L'Ennemi, his writing remained vigorous and vital throughout.

Like many of his contemporaries, he made extensive use of Flaubert's stylistic innovations. The ternary period

occurs quite frequently but is not abused. Guiches' concern for the vigour of his prose protected him from too heavy a reliance on formal procedures and from devitalising devices like the falling cadence. Where the ternary rhythm is used it is usually well-cushioned by a varied rhythmic pattern in adjacent sentences. However, in the first few lines of Céleste Prudhomat we find two examples of the ternary period in consecutive sentences, almost as if to proclaim at the outset, his debt to the author of Madame Bovary:

Aussitôt une jeune fille, une pâle pensionnaire, se dressa sur son banc. Les yeux baissés, les mains inoccupées et flottantes, elle s'avança vers la table de l'examineur. (p.5)<sup>20</sup>

Guiches, here as elsewhere, reserves the device for occasions of predictable routine or controlled reaction and as part of a varied sequence of rhythm: "Il y avait chez lui plus que de la sollicitude paternelle. Il y avait, aussi, et peut-être avant tout, le souci de son ambition." (p.6) Here, Céleste's father's ambition is revealed in the last part of a ternary period which is itself dependant on the preceding sentence. "A de larges intervalles, un vol de pigeons, s'abat lourdement, en tourbillon de neige." (p.42) conveys the regularity and uniform action of the diving pigeons. "L'institutrice le regardait, croyant à une plaisanterie, et elle se mit à rire par complaisance" (p.43) indicates Céleste's polite reaction to the political remarks of the mayor.

The ternary phrase is much less frequent in L'Ennemi: Rigal, Chavasseur's neighbour, who had lost his vines through phylloxera, helps with Chavasseur's harvest: "Le courage

semblait lui revenir, tandis qu'il pétrissait cette pâte rouge, mouteuse et boursouflée de bulles qui crevaient sous ses doigts." (p.71)<sup>21</sup>

The influence of Flaubert had, by this time, 1887, been superseded by the influence of Huysmans and the Goncourts. The rhythm of his prose was beginning to reflect the vigour and eloquence of speech. Chavasseur's love for his wife finding no response:

Il avait reporté, dans sa passion pour le vignoble, la fougue de cette tendresse qu'il avait inutilement prodiguée. C'est seulement dans les Perdigoux qu'il vivait, que son cerveau s'embrasait, qu'il retrouvait les enthousiasmes de ses vingt ans, que son sang battait de magnanimes pulsations. Sa vigne n'était plus une chose pour lui, mais une créature qu'il épousait. (p.30)

A second feature of Flaubert's style of which, like Zola, Guiches made wide use throughout his literary career, was free indirect speech. There are many examples of this in works as far apart in time and subject as Céleste Prudhomat, Le Tremplin (1919) and Tout se Paye (1928). Although, occasionally, as in the following example from L'Ennemi, the reader is left in some doubt as to whether the thoughts are Guiches' or his character's, the device is an important one which allows the writer to explore more deeply the minds of his characters than mere dialogue would allow. Chavasseur sees the poor peasants who had helped with the harvest, making their way back home, and thinks of their lives:

...et puis la faim, la mendicité, les maladies et la mort, la suprême délivrance qui les coucherait tous, l'un près de l'autre dans cette terre qui les avait tués! Car ils mourraient de la terre, de la terre qui se retournait enfin contre ses bourreaux. (p.73)

Guiches, undoubtedly, has used the technique here to allow himself the opportunity to philosophise on the destructive force of nature. Elsewhere, however, he uses it to carry the vitality of dialogue over into narrative text.

Alors elle résolut de prévenir Jacques. Il fallait qu'il fût instruit dans le plus bref délai. Mais où était-il? A Maisonvieille? En Italie? Une fiévreuse impatience l'agitait.  
(Céleste Prud'homme, p.95)

Le souvenir du peintre la reprit. Où était-il? Le reverrait-elle? Une chaleur de fièvre l'empêchait de dormir et elle se retournait agitée, cherchant les places fraîches. (p.27)

Elle eut peu de peine à calmer ses scrupules, mais toutefois une pensée la gênait. La famille Mazurier irait au grand complet à la Sainte-Table.... Bah! elle dirait à ces dames qu'elle les avait devancées, ayant fait ses dévotions à Marnières (...) (p.28)

Elle se rappelait comment Jacques l'avait prise à Maisonvieille, la brisant de caresses, avec des mots si doux dont le souvenir la faisait palpiter. Il y avait huit mois de cela! Et il n'avait pas oublié puisqu'il l'avait placée à Mazolles, tout près de lui. Il ne pouvait épouser l'institutrice de Marnières, mais celle de Mazolles!... Son rêve s'exaltait ainsi, s'échappait dans les perspectives d'un bonheur à deux, régulier. (p.46)

To describe to us progressively, the state of mind of his heroine, Guiches found free indirect speech indispensable. Philippe Destal's ecstatic reaction to hearing his wife's cries in adultery is also related in free indirect speech:

Il répondit à ce cri par un immense tré-saillement de joie. Il venait de le reconnaître, de le retrouver enfin!... C'était le cri d'Adrienne, ce cri de l'ivresse inexprimable, du débordement, de la plénitude, presque de la souffrance! (p.234)<sup>22</sup>

Few writers escaped the powerful influence of the Goncourts, whose efforts to invigorate French prose to the limit of its expressive and impressionist capacity, left their mark on the style of large numbers of disciples and admirers. In Guiches'

case as we have already seen, the influence was sometimes strong and nearly always unfortunate.

A striking example of Guiches' use of 'écriture artiste', quoted perhaps unfairly against Guiches, by Guy Robert,<sup>23</sup> comes in a very early short story published in 1887, Les Ombres Gardiennes is a very slight and improbable tale of a young couple who cannot forget the love they each pledged to the romantic figures of their past. The girl, in particular, deliriously persists in calling her husband by the name of her idyllic partner. (It is interesting to compare the way this idea is developed in Philippe Destal five years later, where the husband wants to address his second wife by the name of his first). The young couple escape the 'artistic' treatment but the parents and the setting are portrayed in the new creative style:

Ces simples mots avaient impérativement chuté  
l'enseignement des entretiens, et, devant la  
cheminée à massifs landiers, le vieillard, qui  
venait de prononcer cette invitation d'appariteur  
silencieux, s'établissait pour discourir.<sup>24</sup>

Guy Robert refers to Céleste Prudhomat as revealing the indiscreet influence of Madame Bovary in its general plan and that of the Goncourts in the artistic character of the style.<sup>25</sup> What Martin Turnell refers to as the Goncourts' impressionist style<sup>26</sup> occurs in the pages of Guiches' writings as it did in the pages of Zola and most contemporary writers. The use of substantives in place of adjectives or verbs to suggest rather than give a precise description was a stylistic device characteristic of both contemporary art and contemporary literature. While Céleste is waiting apprehensively for her friend Germaine or her lover Jacques to come in: "Un frôlement

de robe, un glissement pressé de bottines se firent entendre tout près dans la salle à manger." (p.38) Shortly afterwards, prophetically, when Jacques puts forward his plan to move Céleste to Mazolles:

Un rembrunissement du ciel effaça le soleil  
(...) la masse des nuées ballottées par la  
bourrasque s'affaissa en un écroulement de  
tonnerre et de pluie qui noya le paysage dans  
les hachures tombantes du brouillard. (p.38)

Robert is wrong to suggest, however, that these stylistic features obtrude in Céleste Prudhomat, where, in fact, Guiches' style was as direct, effective and discreet as in any of his other novels.

Céleste Prudhomat is then only occasionally marred by the Goncourts' influence. L'Ennemi, written in its final version during the period of Guiches' friendship with Huysmans, shows the latter's influence. In Le Banquet Guiches acknowledges his debt to Huysmans:

Des aspects aussi m'apparaissent, qui  
m'étaient jusqu'à présent masqués. Je  
comprends, de mieux en mieux le "rendement"  
des mots, comment des faubourgs et des  
banlieues naissent autour d'un adjectif  
et comment un verbe ou même un simple  
adverbe savent s'horizonner. Et c'est pour-  
quoi, d'un bout à l'autre, je récris  
l'Ennemi. 27

The novel is, therefore, rich in special effects, accumulations of expressive words. The harvest is described as "une éruption de végétation impétueuse"; the vines become entangled in each other "dans une fièvre de fécondité". Rigal, plunging his hands into the grape-juice, "pétrissait cette pâte rouge, mouêuse et boursouflée de bulles." 28

The Goncourts' fondness for nouns, examined by Professor



Ullmann,<sup>29</sup> finds its counterpart here too, sometimes in the form of the verbless sentence:

Puis les chasselas dorés comme des topazes,  
les musqués, les rouges, les claires, les  
muscats gris, les blancs très rares, becquetés  
par les moineaux, vidés et flétris par les  
guêpes, les muscats rosés, plus petits que  
des prunelles de haie, les plants de fer, à  
l'enveloppe grise et tachetée.<sup>30</sup>

What Professor Ullmann calls the 'action-noun',<sup>31</sup> is much in evidence here too, with its power to give the effect of extensive and impersonal activity: "Tout cela poussait côte à côte, dans cette fusion fraternelle des races végétales et dégageait un épanouissement de vigueur dans l'affaîsissement de sa lourde gestation."<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, Guiches refers to the spread of phylloxera as "son horrible avancement de putréfaction."<sup>32</sup>

Huysmans congratulated Guiches on his "style fermement pioché et pavé de térébrantes expressions qui vous fripent la moëlle."<sup>33</sup> The effect of overworking adjectives and verbs, however, is often only to cloud the meaning without compensation. The peasants' attitude to misery is described in these terms: "Ils l'avaient fortement supportée pour embourgeoiser le fils aussi bien que pour nipper de cossus atours la "drolle" destinée à raboter la race par sa fécondante éducation."<sup>34</sup>

Philippe Destal too was praised for its "style très curieux et très artistique",<sup>35</sup> this time by François Coppée. The conscious exploitation of unusual combinations of words for effect is particularly evident in the first part of the novel. Guiches describes the château:

Autour du château fourmillait une banlieue de bruyères bouquetées de busseroles accrochant à leurs ramilles les grappes rouges des raisins d'ours.(....) Aux solstices de canicule, des nuées de papillons s'associaient aux abeilles et tourbillonnaient au-dessus de ces steppes chardonneuses qui exaspéraient d'urticaires l'embrasement des après-midi.<sup>36</sup>

Here again, we find the Goncourts' 'action-noun' and the search for effect. The poor people near the château lived in "un croupissement de marécage", their children "guerroyaient dans les environs, maraudaient ou s'étiolaient sur place, rouges de scrofules dont les mères aggravaient, par des cultures ingénieuses, les répugnantes éclosions."

La Pudeur de Sodome has already been referred to in these pages as containing further examples of 'écriture artiste'. Fortunately, Guiches, although clearly enjoying this venture into creative writing, nonetheless had enough artistic awareness not to make these excesses a permanent feature of his work. His other novels of the time, L'Imprévu, Un Cœur Discret, and the novels which followed are spared these stylistic disfigurements.

A further characteristic of Guiches' style, which must stand as an essential element stems from his origins in Quercy. As with the Goncourts and Zola, it is the dialogue of Guiches' novels that strikes home to the reader with strength and conviction. Here the effects of artistic style are forgotten in favour of the direct simplicity of colloquial speech.

Take, for example, the peasant in Céleste Prudhomat who comes to Céleste asking for a note for his wife to reassure her that a correction of the word 'amour' in his daughter's exercise book is not addressed to him:

Ma femme sait lire, dit-il en le feuilletant, moi je sais tant seulement signer mon nom. Paraît qu'il y a quelque chose d'amitié. La femme il est jalouse comme un démon et s'est foutu dans la tête que c'était pour moi, sauf votre respect, que vous aviez mis ce mot d'écrit.(p.53)

The man's illiteracy is confirmed by his speech, but not to excess. Céleste's reply expresses all the embittered disillusionment she feels for her profession, all the self-centred ruthlessness of her ambition and her scornful disrespect for the uneducated village folk: "Votre femme est une sottie, s'écria-t-elle, et si elle n'est pas contente, qu'elle vienne me parler. Je n'ai pas à me disculper de pareilles accusations..." (p.53)

Guiches' ventures into the dialect of Quercy are chosen with care. La Sans Besoin, the beggar-woman, bringing the first letter from Jacques Mauvalon for Céleste, tells her that the sender is "Lou moussu". (p.45) Sans Besoin, as a peasant woman who had been the mistress of Jacques' father and had been abandoned by him, is a symbol of the fate that awaits Céleste. Although separated by education and ambition, they are both hounded by their humble origins. Sans Besoin is reduced to appealing for "Un paou de caritad per l'amour de Diou". (p.45) Her role as a figure of destiny clearly warning Céleste of her fate is unequivocally revealed when Céleste, asking to be told her fortune, when her marriage to Jacques will be, receives the ominous reply: "Tsamai. Jamais." (p.45) Sans Besoin's previous words, "Conro la noco? (...) Ambé lou moussu" (p.45) are not translated into French, but the importance of the "Tsamai" is obviously too great to risk it not being understood by the reader.

The dialect becomes associated with the genuine character of the ordinary people. We are told that Germaine, who belonged to the upper classes was nonetheless loved by the

peasants because she understood and spoke their dialect. The second occasion in the novel when dialect is introduced to any extent is when Céleste becomes aware that she is pregnant. She becomes interested in little children and hears a neighbour singing a local cradle song to her child. The contrast between Céleste's pregnancy and the motherhood of the local village woman is ironic. Although unperceived by Céleste, the simple life she has abandoned holds a joy in motherhood which she will now never experience. Her fate has already been pronounced by la Sans Besoin.

In this, as in many other stylistic features, Guiches was making use, with more subtlety than Balzac or Zola, of practices which were being increasingly used by the novelists of the nineteenth century to enrich their prose. Guiches' peasants speak in the appropriate idiom, as do his soldiers, his intellectuals and his politicians. It is often important to the plot that they should do so. Céleste Prudhomat's feelings of shame for her humble origins are aroused by her father's loud comments in the restaurant on the successful culmination of her education at the convent:

"Et vous êtes contente d'en être sortie?"  
 "Et bougrement sortie!" cria Prudhomat  
 "Oh! papa," murmura Céleste. (p.8)

Similarly, the Prudhomats' lack of education leads them to a mispronunciation of the phrase '*l'estruction*, c'est tout', (p.16) the dual importance of which is emphasised by printing the word '*estruction*' in italics. The contrast between the lofty idealism of the philosophy and the ignorance of its expounder is clearly indicated and points to the future collapse of Céleste's world which has been founded on such a philosophy.

That Guiches was able to converse in the local patois we know from his autobiographical work En Vacances (1924), where, in his entry for Monday July 27, 1914, he tells how he and his wife asked the way of two peasants "Je les interroge en patois" and how the peasant woman eagerly took advantage of the chance to talk to someone. Nevertheless, he makes very sparing use of it in his novels.

On the other hand, he does make an attempt to reproduce the regional accent of the President of the Republic in La Tueuse who offers Fraizal the Premiership:

(Son accent...) tenait le milieu entre le 'bagasse' de la Province et le 'fouchtra' de l'Auvergne - "Vous j'êtes l'homme du jour. Je suis chur que vous j'êtes auchi chelui de demain et he cherai heureux si vous acceptiez d'être chelui de la chituation."<sup>37</sup>

Like most writers of his generation, Guiches suffered, and perhaps even enjoyed, the influence of the Goncourts. Words clearly had a fascination for him. Many of his novels are concerned with men who use words in their professions - writers, politicians, lawyers, actors. He was infected with enthusiasm for exponents of the spoken word as wide apart as Gambetta and Sarah Bernhardt.

On the other hand, by 1892, he felt rather differently about the fashion for clever writing. In Philippe Destal, he wrote disparagingly of "les artifices littéraires en vogue",<sup>38</sup> and was already feeling discouraged and disillusioned with the writing of novels.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Le Banquet, p.62.
2. La Pudeur de Sodome, Paris. Maison Quantin, 1888. Evidence of Guiches' meticulous research into the background of his story will be found in Appendix C (ix and (x)).
3. L'Imprévu, Paris, Tresse et Stock, 1890, Chapter 1, pp.2-3. The novel was first published in Le Figaro in 1890. Gustave de Mal herbe lent Guiches his Paris apartment in which to write the novel and the work contains a description of the view of Paris from its window. Goncourt wrote to Guiches on the publication of L'Imprévu: '(...) une étude très nature de la vie commune dans la réserve et la froideur de l'amant, amenant la brutalité de la fin (...) de la belle, de la bonne, de l'aiguillée psychologie dans une excellente langue littéraire.' (Le Banquet, p.215)
4. With the kind permission of Mademoiselle Marguerite Guiches, I was able to examine a number of manuscripts and other documents relating to the life and work of Gustave Guiches and to talk to her about her father. I also received a great deal of help and cooperation from Guiches' nephew, Monsieur Jean Pagès. Transcripts of these taped conversations and photocopies of pages of the MSS. are to be found in the Appendices B and E at the end of this thesis.
5. From the MS. of L'Imprévu, kindly loaned to me by M. Jean Pagès. (See Appendix B(i))
6. Probably Albas. The Mazels' house in the Square at Flottes occupies a similar position to that of the Guiches family, which was turned into a school after the deaths of Guiches' parents, in Albas.
7. Un Cœur Discret, Paris, E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie., 1892, Chapter I.
8. Jules Huret, Enquête sur l'Evolution Littéraire. Charpentier, 1891.
9. Philippe Destal, Paris. Tresse et Stock, 1892. Chapter I p. 7 et seq. Sacrilegious sex was a frequent Decadent theme. Huysmans used it in Là-bas, 1891, and Bonnetain also used it in his story Sœur Saint Clément, in Amours Nomades, 1888. See A.A. Greaves, op.cit., p.300. Guiches' study of the physical symptoms of extreme religious devotion and self-denial in this novel was a result of much preparatory documentation. See Appendix C (i)-(viii).



10. Adrienne was yet another of Guiches' heroines who was educated in a convent school and who indulged there in romantic ideas. In her case we are told that she and her friends had mentally chosen their future husbands from among the young men of Clermont. Her chosen one was called Paul. This is a curious re-enactment of a story Guiches wrote in 1887 and published in Poètes et prosateurs, Anthologie Contemporaine des Ecrivains Français et Belges. Bruxelles, Librairie Nouvelle, 1887, under the title of Les Ombres Gardiennes. The story is chiefly remarkable for its 'écriture artiste' but it also tells of a young couple who had pledged themselves to romantic figures of their past, one of whom was called Paul. The girl strives deliriously to identify her romantic hero with her lover in the same way that Philippe Destal desires to reincarnate his first wife in his second.
11. Philippe Destal was first published in serial form in Gil Blas in 1892 and Guiches then became a regular contributor. He describes the staff of Gil Blas in Le Banquet, p.276.
12. The MS. of the synopsis of the novel is reproduced in Appendix B at the end of this thesis.
13. An extract from the MS. of Philippe Destal.
14. Le Spectacle, Paris, Editions Spes. 1932, pp.55-149.
15. See Appendix E.
16. Trop de Zèle, Paris, H. Simonis-Empis, 1898, Chapter II.
17. Bonne Fortune, Paris, E. Fasquelle, 1905, p.31.
18. Un Monsieur Très Bien, Paris, E. Fasquelle, 1910, Chapter III.
19. His daughter told me that he travelled abroad only twice, once to Spain and once to Venice.
20. Céleste Prud'homme, Paris Modern Bibliothèque, Arthème Fayard, 1905.
21. L'Ennemi, Mœurs de Province, Paris, Librairie Moderne, 1887.
22. Philippe Destal, Paris, Tresse et Stock, 1892.
23. La Terre d'Emile Zola - Paris. Les Belles Lettres, 1952, p.393.



24. Les Ombres Gardiennes, Bruxelles, Librairie Nouvelle, 1887. Anthologie Contemporaine des Ecrivains Français et Belges.
25. Op.cit., p.420.
26. M. Turnell, The Art of French Fiction, Hamish Hamilton, 1959, pp.18-26.
27. Le Banquet, Paris, Editions Spes, 1925, Chapter 1, p.83.
28. L'Ennemi, op.cit., pp. 59 and 71.
29. S. Ullmann, pp.130-137. Style in the French Novel, C.U.P., 1957.
30. L'Ennemi, p.60.
31. S. Ullmann, op.cit., pp.134-35.
32. L'Ennemi, p.98.
33. Le Banquet, pp.124-127.
34. L'Ennemi, p.142.
35. Quoted by Henri Austruy, Gustave Guiches, Sa Vie, Ses Oeuvres, Ses Amitiés, Paris, La Nouvelle Revue, 1936, Vol.141-143, p.86.
36. Philippe Destal, p.4.
37. La Tueuse, p.181.
38. Philippe Destal, p.116.

## CHAPTER 4

Novels 1915-1935

- (i) Les Deux Soldats (1917), Le Tremplin (1919), La Tueuse (1921), Tout se paye (1928), La Part d'amour (1930) and La Vie Amoureuse de Murat (1930)
- 

J'ai été ingrat envers ma terre natale. J'en ai honte. Je l'ai reniée. Je lui ai repris une pensée que j'ai donnée à une pensée étrangère et j'ai eu, de cet amour, des enfants que vous-même n'avez pas reconnus comme miens, mes derniers livres! Eh bien! elle s'est vengée notre terre! Elle a voulu me reprendre et pour cela, elle s'est offerte à moi comme une noble tâche, un beau devoir. Elle a mis dans ma main la pioche et la charrue. Elle a voulu que je la travaille, que je la rende féconde, que je l'aime et, quand j'ai eu fait tout cela, croyant agir pour le compte d'un autre de qui je m'étais nommé le remplaçant, je me suis aperçu que je l'aimais pour mon compte comme jamais je ne l'avais aimée.<sup>1</sup>

Guiches had had sixteen successful years in the theatre. He had turned away from his native Quercy and had drawn for his inspiration on the Paris around him.<sup>2</sup> When war broke out in 1914, his thoughts returned to Quercy. He had paid regular visits through the years to see his friends and often invited people of the Paris theatre world to join him there. Henri Lavedan, writing in L'Illustration in 1907, on the occasion of the great success of Chacun sa Vie, at the Comédie Française, had predicted that Guiches would one day return to his first love, Quercy.<sup>3</sup>

In Les Deux Soldats (1917) he tells the story of a successful writer who, anxious to find again his true inspiration, returns to his native province. When war breaks out he takes the place of a young farmer, so that the latter can join up as a soldier with an easy mind knowing that his farm will be looked after. In the course of his work on the land a strong bond of affection grows up between the author, Julien

Farjol, and the young soldier's wife, Zélia. He resists the temptation to give way to his love and manages by way of a trick to cure Zélia of loving him before her husband returns.

This novel, related in the first person, clearly has a strong autobiographical element. Julien Farjol speaks of the great start to his career with his novels La Villageoise, Le Cœur Champêtre, Ce vieux ciel bleu and of one of his plays which have failed. This novelist turned playwright was Guiches himself, thinly disguised. He recognises that he has gone the way of all who move to the capital and become professionals, losing their true inspiration.<sup>4</sup>

The house taken by Farjol in the Cévennes is La Framy, 3 kilometres from Montech. Again, this is an easily recognisable corruption of Camy, the village 3 kilometres from Luzech and also from Albas, where Guiches had his own house from which he could see the church at Albas. Guiches' house was clearly the model for La Framy, which, Farjol tells us, is "la maison qui regarde", with windows which "flamboyèrent de soleil couchant et dont les regards noircissaient sur la pâleur des jours."<sup>5</sup>

In his survey of Guiches' life and works Henri Austruy quotes from a letter from an admirer of Les Deux Soldats, Pierre Vallet, in which he indicates his appreciation of Guiches' portrait of provincial life at such a time:

Vous avez su imaginer l'âme de la terre et vous m'avez appris qu'en dehors de la trépidante de Paris, il y a une autre vie, beaucoup plus rude, beaucoup plus ardue, mais autrement agréable et utile. Vous avez bien su montrer comment sont les paysans, leurs labeurs écrasants, leurs soucis et leurs joies. Votre petite Zélia est une vraie paysanne avec toute sa naïveté et toute sa poésie.<sup>6</sup>

The moment, in some respects, was right for such an appeal to the sentimental and patriotic upsurge in the hearts of the French people. Pierre Vallet, a Paris lawyer, was perhaps typical of them. He was, on the other hand, not a reliable judge of provincial life. Not everyone would have agreed with his assessment of the girl in the country as being always naive and poetic. Nevertheless his reaction to the novel is a clear indication of its style and impact.

Guiches was returning to the subject of Quercy after a prolonged absence. This, in itself, led him to an over-sentimental reaction to it. Add to this the strong feeling of patriotism, which Guiches clearly felt and was equally anxious to convey, and the result is a powerful evocation of an idyllic countryside in which strong forces of loyalty, dedication and self-denial are uppermost. This is a long way from the atmosphere of insidious corruption in L'Ennemi or the portrait of harsh reality in Céleste Prudhomat.

In its way it was nonetheless an effective story and the Académie Française awarded it the Prix Née. To his portrait of the noble national patriotic effort Guiches brought all his rhetorical skill. The description of the threshing machine at work is a typical example of the quasi-religious evocation of patriotic toil:

...Dans la poussière pailletée d'or, on ne perçoit que des silhouettes enjuponnées de noir ou le torse blanc ceinturé de rouge, s'affairant autour de la machine sombre dont le mince tuyau lance précipitamment des bouffées de vapeur. Debout et faisant corps avec elle, un homme coiffé d'un chapeau de curé, portant des lunettes à verres noircis et une barbe de missionnaire, une barbe sauvage, a l'air de réciter des prières en touchant à des choses qui s'animent sous ses doigts, des pistons qui vont et viennent, une courroie qui se déroule, une porte qui s'ouvre découvrant un enfer flamboyant. C'est une messe à la fois mécanique et mystique. (Les Deux Soldats, p.144)

Again, the exacting work of exploiting the land is given a poetic direction:

C'est lent, c'est réfléchi, c'est solennel,  
c'est poignant ce terrible coup de collier  
donné par cette troupe d'enfants, de femmes,  
de vieux, surtout de vieux, à qui la terre  
prit leur jeunesse, et de qui maintenant  
elle eut la vieillesse. On dirait une  
assemblée de débiles et d'informes s'excitant  
à la danse. (p.183)

This strongly lyrical evocation of Quercy is accompanied here by a reaction against the difficult struggle he had had in Paris in the early part of his career. As for many others, 1914 marked the end of an era for Guiches, more so than he realised. Les Deux Soldats is not only a work of popular patriotism, it is also a recapitulation of personal experience, of loves and hates, success and failure: "Le Paris d'à- présent on ne pourra jamais assez l'aimer ni l'admirer." but this is not true of the past: "Ah! vous croyez qu'on y récompensait le talent et qu'on y couronnait le génie? Une mêlée épouvantable où, si on voulait attraper à peine de quoi vivre, il fallait jouer non seulement des coudes mais des poings, des pieds et même du couteau!" (p.292)

His affection for the contemporary Paris is confirmed in En Vacances (1924),<sup>7</sup> in which he recounts the holiday he and his family spent in Quercy in 1914 from July to October. It is also relevant to note that after war broke out in August, he remained for only two months in Quercy, during which he tried to be of service in propaganda, to help the people to know what was happening and give them confidence. He quickly realised, however, that he would do better to stick to his own job as a writer and that he must return to Paris:

Je veux participer aux peines, aux angoisses,  
et aux rares bonheurs des êtres qui m'entourent.  
Si! Je veux travailler, mais prenant ma part  
des grandes émotions créées par le moment. Je

veux communier avec elles, et pour cela, il  
est absolument urgent de changer d'atmosphère.  
(En Vacances, p.178)

The truth was, therefore, that his love of Quercy was a nostalgic love, which depended on his seeing it from afar with occasional brief visits. He needed Paris with its noise and its activity just as much in 1914 as he had when he started his career there in 1881: "Si je ne me mêle à la vie de Paris qu'au théâtre et chez quelques amis je ne l'entends pas moins vibrer autour de moi... Si j'ouvre ma fenêtre je me laisse un moment avec délice assourdir par son fracas de bataille." (p.2) The Julien Farjol who put his hand to the spade and the plough in Les Deux Soldats to save the harvest was not Gustave Guiches, although he would perhaps have liked it to be.

Maurice Donnay tells us<sup>8</sup> how Guiches' life changed after the great pre-war successes in the theatre, how he worked again at the novel, striving to win back the interest of the public. Post-war France was a different world, however. Donnay refers to "les mœurs nouvelles" of the beginning of the century and of Guiches' difficulty in adapting himself to them "par la délicatesse, par un dédain distingué." This was much more true of the post-war Guiches in a society brutalized by war and in which the subtler aspects of human behaviour were forgotten.

L'Homme qui Parle, published in 1920, was little different from Trop de Zèle, written twenty-two years earlier. This time it relates the unsuccessful marriage of a romantic adventuress Thérèse Mauzel to a Spanish political adventurer Emilio d'Alvégar, and the infatuation for her of a Paris lawyer, Philippe Lardier, who has been engaged to secure the annulment of the marriage. The action, set against the



background of a Louis XIV fête in seventeenth century costume, with Lully's music, and against the lawyer's apartment with its interesting history and its collection of miniatures, including plates by Félicien Rops, seems as remote from post-war France as the old aristocracy and demi-monde were irrelevant to the new men and women of France. The pre-war era of dilettantism had been replaced by problems of more practical immediacy. Guiches' descriptive skill was not enough to save the novel. In the lawyer's apartment were: "...les boîtes à bouquins qui lui riaient au nez à pleines mâchoires, découvrant leurs vieux livres noirs en rangées de chicots."<sup>9</sup>

From the legal, Guiches now turned to the political arena. The political ferment of the post-war era as well as the pre-war years was a subject of interest to most. Similarly, the growing role of the working class and left-wing labour movement on the political scene was a feature of contemporary life which could not be ignored in the post-war years. Zola had written powerfully of the exploited mineworkers in Germinal in 1886, exploited by the bosses and victims of the capitalist system. Guiches' novel Le Tremplin (1919) and its sequel La Tueuse (1921)<sup>10</sup> updated the story by depicting the exploitation of the working class by its own leaders.

Not for the first time in Guiches' novels the stage is dominated by a man with a great gift for the spoken word, a man who could hold and move other men to action or tears by the power of his oratory. Guiches himself was a widely appreciated raconteur and his novels and journalism testify to his skill in manipulating the written word. But the power of the spoken word had also always fascinated him; lawyers who could plead a cause, politicians who could sway crowds, had featured in many of his novels.



He writes in Le Banquet of meeting Georges Clemenceau in 1893 at the house of Alphonse Daudet in the rue Belle-chasse:

Je le regarde, effaré. Tant de luttes;  
tant de plongées, tant de remontées, tant  
de haines, tant de colères, tant de ran-  
cœurs, tant de frénésies, d'ambitions, de  
gloire, de vengeance, s'accumulent dans  
cette poitrine qui encore plastronne.<sup>11</sup>

But the inspiration for these novels was undoubtedly the man who, before Guiches, had left Quercy to make his name in Paris, Léon Gambetta (1832-1882). Gambetta was a native of Cahors. Guiches had seen him in 1880 on the occasion of Gambetta's visit to Cahors to inaugurate a monument to the 'Gardes mobiles du Lot':

Il s'était fait violence, car il lui répugnait  
de retourner dans la ville natale qui avait  
poursuivi à coup de pierres, sa voiture de  
fugitif, dix ans auparavant (....) Ce fut  
d'abord comme le sourd farfouillement d'une  
chaudière qui bout. Puis soudain la parole  
s'affranchit, bondit au dehors comme si, en  
elle rugissait le clameur de tous ces héros  
morts dont il prenait les commissions de  
revanche... et sa parole, la seule au monde  
qui put affronter l'espace, s'y ruait comme  
l'ouragan, y lançait des éclairs, y roulait  
le tonnerre jusqu'à ce que, finalement, ce  
miraculeux évocateur eut fait lever, à nos  
yeux, l'aurore du demain triomphant!...<sup>12</sup>

The hero of Guiches' novels, Alexandre Fraizal, like Gambetta, is an advocate with the sense of vocation and eloquence of a leader. Guiches describes his humble origins, son of a workman and a servant girl, a badly behaved but outstanding pupil, a rebel with an acute sense of theatre, intolerant and arrogant, ruthless in using his enemies and his friends to achieve his aims. He helps his friend François Carmier in order to win the financial support of his wealthy father. Once he has reached a position of power in the government he shows scant respect for his loyal friends.

In the first of the two volumes Guiches reveals the idealist, already arrogant and ruthless but in the name of his ideals. His essay in a school examination indicates his philosophy:

La conscience impose à l'homme au pouvoir le devoir de se rappeler qu'il n'est rien par soi-même, qu'il est l'élu du peuple, qu'il ne vit que par sa volonté, comme elle impose au peuple le devoir de s'élever, de monter, de toujours monter! Que le peuple conquière, par l'instruction, une force intellectuelle et scientifique, que se sachant l'intelligence comme il se sait le nombre, il ait la notion de sa toute-puissance!<sup>13</sup>

By 1883, when, Guiches tells us, Fraizal was writing these words, Léon Gambetta had been dead for a year, but ten years later Georges Clemenceau was still forecasting for the future the realisation of representation for the vast masses of the people, "who, having force and legitimacy on their side, are therefore invincible."<sup>14</sup>

Fraizal takes part in a strike at the factory of his political rival Paraire before the elections, a strike with its confrontation between strikers and troops and consequent bloodshed. Such scenes were familiar to readers of Germinal, but in Le Tremplin they are softened by the theme of love between Fraizal and Berthe Paraire, his rival's wife. Le Tremplin tells the dual story of Fraizal's victory over Paraire in the election and in his private life, since Fraizal leaves for the Chambre des Députés in Paris together with Paraire's wife.

Guiches himself, as we have seen, had previously shown no interest in politics. He had never before written about the ordinary people and their difficulties, nor did he ever indicate that he understood what was happening to the working-class people of France. If he had, he would probably have

written his story twenty years earlier when the facts were more contemporary and urgent. Nor had he much sympathy perhaps for people in the mass. More than once in his novels and memoirs he wrote critically of the fickleness of public feeling.<sup>15</sup> But as a psychologist, interested in character and the effect of events upon character and personality, he was studying here the effect of politics on the lives of Fraizal and Berthe, among others, as he had studied the effect of phylloxera on Chavasseur and his family thirty-three years earlier. Where phylloxera was the enemy not only of the farmer, but also of his happiness, so politics is the killer of loyalty and truth between husband and wife and between friends.

Huysmans and Guiches frequently regaled each other in the 1890s with stories of the lapses of ministers and politicians, and of the hypocrisy of people in high places.<sup>16</sup> Guiches puts the knowledge of parliamentary intrigue and manoeuvring, which he had acquired over the years, to effective use in La Tueuse. The story of Fraizal's road to the betrayal of his belief in the sanctity of the will of the people is told in clear terms. Fraizal, travelling with Berthe to Paris, starts out in a 3rd class compartment, but at the first stop changes to 1st class: "Tu ne penses pas que nous allons voyager dans une boîte infecte, en compagnie de paysans qui nous empes-teraient avec leurs victuailles." (p.14)<sup>17</sup>

The other deputies whom Fraizal gathers round him, hoping to use them for his own ends, are the negation of all Berthe's fondest hopes for an honest 'salon politique'. She is dismayed

by the vile intrigue and scandalous conduct which fills their lives, by the corruption openly indulged in by them, by their unscrupulous greed for money and their attempts to ruin their adversaries. Guiches well knew that these were a feature of the deputy's life, when the centralisation of power in Paris led to the corruption of ministers and deputies by those in the provinces who sought advancement:

Il n'était question que de scandales dont la révélation faisait pousser de petits cris de joie, d'affaires de pots-de-vin qui allaient être ébruités par des bookmakers, de trésoreries et de perceptions littéralement vendues, de chèques touchés pour des concessions de mines, de gabégies, d'extorsions, de chapardages, de pillages, d'immondes histoires de mœurs, tous les pots aux roses qui étaient des pots d'ordure qu'on allait déballer. (p.64)

To Berthe's protest that these men are not the ones Fraizal should associate with, that those who succeed are not like that, Fraizal retorts, and Guiches seems to say with him: "Ils y ont tous passé! (...) Il n'y a que les lames de fond qui portent au sommet." (p.66) Guiches wrote to his publisher: "La Tueuse c'est la politique d'intérêt personnel... Il n'y a d'attaqué dans mon livre que la politique d'égoïsme et ceux qui la pratiquent avec le plus de cynisme seront les premiers à applaudir." (See Appendix A (viii))

Predictably, Fraizal's marriage with Berthe is threatened as he takes one mistress after another and his moral credit with Berthe suffers on both private and political levels. The episode in which Berthe obtains letters written by Fraizal to the Princess d'Altenberg points clearly to Guiches' sources of information. In these:

Il critiquait, il bafouait, outrageait son propre pays, attestant que, par moments il avait honte d'être Français, reniant ses idées, insultant son parti, passant en revue le monde politique et salissant ses

amis comme ses ennemis par de si effroyables révélations et de si boueuses calomnies, que Paraire avait raison, quelques lignes seulement de cette correspondance étant publiées, toute la vie publique et toute la vie privée de Fraizal en seraient ignominieusement anéanties du coup. (p.193)

This is clearly inspired by letters referred to by Huysmans in the course of conversations with Guiches about the affairs of politicians which came to his attention during his work at the *Sûreté Générale* of the *Ministère de l'Intérieur*. Huysmans told Guiches that, while the whole of France was *fêting Général Boulanger*, he had copies of love letters in which "ce vieux gosse d'imbécile écrit à la femme qu'il aime et qui est peut-être envoyée vers lui pour l'empêcher de nuire!"<sup>18</sup> According to Huysmans, the general's private words were a denial of his public image and he quoted to Guiches an extract which Guiches recalls in his memoirs: "Ma bien aimée, si tu savais à quel point ces imbéciles m'embêtent et me torturent, et comme je les déteste d'empêcher que je sois tout le temps auprès de toi..."

Guiches' portrait of a successful politician, and man of destiny is a blend of arrogance and ambitious political fervour. At the height of his success, he engineers a strike in Montvalent, his home town, simply to afford himself the triumph of solving it and win back the admiration and devotion of his mistress. But his plan misfires and results in a riot with the deaths of two strikers, and his being driven from the chamber with cries of assassin. Only the character of Berthe supplies the genuine, life-size affection of ordinary humanity in this story. Everything else is larger than life,

appropriate to the world of politics, but perhaps, in the long run, a too-rich recipe of fervour and intrigue. The character of the German princess is a caricature of Teutonic arrogance. The political atmosphere of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth is faithfully reproduced. The original models for the political figures which appear in the novels could undoubtedly be pursued further, although probably none are exact replicas.

Guiches allows himself a gibe at the pre-war politicians who allowed France to become such easy prey to aggression:

Devant la menace étrangère, on comprenait  
enfin vers quel abîme nous poussaient ces  
incapables et ces malfaiteurs qui regardaient,  
avec l'incrédulité de leur criminelle sottise,  
notre premier appareil volant quittant pour  
la première fois le sol et condamnaient  
l'inventeur à une vie misérable, qui votaient  
pour l'aviation des crédits inférieurs de  
trois millions aux crédits allemands... (p.222)

This picture of internal French politics is thrown off-balance by the climax of the story, the news of the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, on June 28, 1914, which brings to an abrupt end the ambitions of the Princess in France and unexpectedly brings about the reconciliation of Berthe and Fraizal in a surge of patriotic emotion:

...ils plongèrent dans le fleuve chantant  
où ils furent aussitôt deux petits flots  
mêlés aux flots qui roulaient les destins  
du pays vers le beau rivage aperçu là-bas...  
au loin... si loin... le rivage inconnu!... (p.254)

Once more the note of optimism in the conclusion does not carry great conviction. The recipe of pessimism which had worked effectively in Céleste Prudhomat and L'Ennemi was perhaps unpopular in 1920. Nevertheless, since such is the message of the novel the optimistic conclusion seems inappropriate.



Guiches' romantic optimism took over again in his next two novels Tout se paye (1928) and La Part d'Amour (1930)<sup>20</sup> The first of these is set against the background of the popular sport of motor-racing and in particular rival firms of racing car designers and manufacturers. In it Guiches tells a good story of the ambitions and love of a young racing car designer, Henry Darrouax, thwarted by the treachery of his friend Leopold Forghues. For the first time, plot is more important than character. Darrouax and Forghues are thinly drawn, as are their fathers and Christine des Fairrières, the heroine of the story. The unexpected arrival of a benefactor who turns out to be Henry's brother by his mother's first marriage is an added indication that in this novel Guiches has left Naturalism far behind and is trying to judge and meet the demands of the new post-war generation. The novel, although very readable, has, however, no special qualities beyond being a good story. Its setting is Paris, but it is vague. The origin of the Darrouax and Des Fairrières families is Quercy, but it has only the briefest mention. Guiches was already very interested in the new medium of the cinema. He may well have thought that his story was 'good cinema'.

La Part d'Amour in fact tells the story of a film-producer Adrien Coursan, who is making a film called Lauzun (the title of a play by Guiches, which he apparently regarded as suitable for the cinema). The character of Coursan, that of a flamboyant and dedicated pioneer of the cinema, whose single-mindedness and rough manners alienate his young wife, is the most carefully drawn figure of the novel. His efforts to prove to his wife that beneath his boorish exterior and behind his enthusiasm for his work, he loves her deeply and



suffers from her indifference, combine with her plan to elope with the star of Lauzun to form the slim plot of the novel. The setting is Brittany and Paris. Again, it is a vague setting. Only the film-maker's world is clearly drawn:

Mais c'est le studio qui, de cet organisme silencieusement puissant, est le cerveau et le chœur. Vaste et haut comme une enceinte de cirque... Des silhouettes carnavalesques vont et viennent, bourgeois et princesse à visages de peaux-rouges, prêtres outrageusement fardés, religieuses impudemment maquillées, soldats bachiquement peinturlurés afin que, photographiquement, ce truquage réalise la physionomie normale des choses, la vérité ne s'obtenant là qu'au moyen du mensonge.

(La Part d'Amour, pp.110-11)

The prose style Guiches had made his own in his early novels, developed, through his writing for the theatre, into a generally more dramatic medium. Free indirect speech had already featured in Philippe Destal (1892).

Twenty-seven years later, in Le Tremplin, the method is still the same. Hearing from an adjoining room that Berthe Paraire has persuaded her husband to put up some money to buy a newspaper, Fraizal is ecstatic:

D'un bond, Fraizal revenait à lui. Il ne s'était donc pas trompé! La preuve! La preuve d'amour! Elle la lui donnait! Et comme ça, tout de suite! La joie lui mettait des larmes dans les yeux, lui élargissait la bouche dans un rire de nègre! Il en aimait Paraire! (p.126)<sub>21</sub>

Faced with a confrontation of strikers and militia Fraizal considers the situation:

Maintenant, il n'y avait plus à parler. Il fallait agir. Et que faire? Le triomphe de sa parole le conduisait là, pitoyablement, à la ridicule et tragique faillite de l'action, là, devant les yeux de son rival, car il stationnait contre le mur de l'administration, en face du perron de l'hôtel, sous les fenêtres mêmes de la salle où la permanence du conseil présidée par Paraire devait délibérer! (p.276)

Here we have a blurring of the line between speech, thought and narrative, with the author almost involving himself in the emotions of his hero. For this is the danger, When the personality of a character seems to affect the style of the narrative, objectivity is lost and although the work acquires a new momentum, the consciousness of the liaison between narrator and hero detracts from the effectiveness of the novel as a piece of objective observation. This almost complete domination of Le Tremplin by its main character, more than anything else, contributes to its failure as a valid and convincing document. La Tueuse, its sequel, continues in the same style. Everything, including the *Chambre des Députés*, is seen directly or indirectly, through the very subjective eyes of Fraizal. Berthe disapproves of the way he is behaving with the German Princess and incurs his hatred:

(...) désormais il serait interné dans une intimité atroce avec la femme qui le haïssait, mais qui ne pouvait le haïr autant qu'il la détestait lui-même, car la politique avait fait, des amants de naguère, deux ennemis irréconciliables, rivés par elle, à un éternel et infernal tête à tête! Ah, l'odieuse créature qui s'était instituée la surveillante, l'espionne, la contrôlease de tous ses actes! La joie qu'elle devait éprouver! Il la lui ferait payer cher cette joie hypocrite, plus exaspérante, sous son masque sérieux, que si, en s'épanouissant, elle osait le braver! Ah, il allait la lui faire sortir cette joie et la cingler, la cravacher, la faire hurler de douleur!<sup>22</sup>

Although it might be said that Guiches was narrating the life of a powerful orator and an effective propagandist and that his novel admirably conveys the force of such a personality, the constant, unrelieved emphasis which results from this narrative technique is somewhat oppressive.

Further examples of a similar use of free indirect speech are to be found, less obtrusively, also in La Part d'Amour and Tout se paye. Here too, they result in a heightening of drama and emotion, more akin to the Romantic than the Naturalist novel. Coursan is overjoyed at having the promise of his nephew and daughter to help him win back his wife's affection:

Quel bien cela lui avait fait! Quelle puissance on acquérait ainsi! ... Plus il s'avouait faible, plus il se sentait fort! Plus il se montrait écrasé, plus il dominait! La première fois que cela lui arrivait! Ah! s'il avait pu être ainsi avec Denise!<sup>23</sup>

Professor Ullmann suggests that Free Indirect Speech enables the novelist to maintain stricter objectivity since his role as narrator is less apparent.<sup>24</sup> In Guiches' case, however, it becomes clear that it can lead to a less balanced, less objective representation. Where the hero is particularly forceful or emotional the effect is excessive.

When he returned to novel writing after the First World War, the stylistic fashions of the old century were long since dead. Now the more basic features of Guiches' style were visible. They were, for the most part, as we have seen, concerned with the faithful representation of reality. But, less controlled and inhibited now was his instinctive love for the rich flow of words which probably lay behind his enthusiasm for the Theatre and his decision to write his two political novels. In La Tueuse, Fraizal incurs the wrath of the Députés:

Trépignant et poings tendus, n'attendant que ce signal pour désobstruer les gorges étouffant de fureur, elle déchaîna contre Fraizal un monstrueux et terrifiant charivari où les grondements de la tempête, les ululements du vent, les roulements, les claquements du tonnerre, les aboiements de chien, les jappements des chacals, les rires d'hyènes, les

fracas de choses qui s'écroulent, tous les sons d'êtres et d'objets frénétiquement secoués ballottaient et poussaient la même clameur, la même huée: - Assassin! Assassin!<sup>25</sup>

We must conclude that either Guiches was unable to throw off the Goncourts' mantle and continued to find effective the practice of using the substantive in place of the verb - "les grondements, - les ululements", etc., or alternatively, that this rhetorical device was an expression of Guiches' own delight in the vibrant phrase and echoing apostrophe. His frequent choice of manipulators of the written and spoken word to be his heroes, his great admiration for Anatole France whose eloquent judgement on Zola and the Manifeste he quotes in Au Banquet de la Vie,<sup>26</sup> his reputation as host and raconteur, all point to a devotion to language and an enthusiasm for eloquence.

In the post-war novel, which could not make up its mind between realism and prose-poetry, Guiches seemed to be turning back to the past rather than stimulated by the present. Where Gide was striving in Les Faux Monnayeurs to write for future generations and re-thinking the accepted structure of the novel, Guiches was preparing to publish his Souvenirs Littéraires. His attempts to be up-to-date with novels about the film industry and motor-racing were highly romantic idylls, remote in spirit from the basic issues of the post-war years. His eloquent prose now seemed an irrelevance.

La Vie Amoureuse de Murat (1930)<sup>27</sup> is the love story of Murat and Caroline, sister of Napoleon Bonaparte. Again Guiches was on home ground. Murat was born in La Bastide-Fortanière in the Causse de Gramat of Quercy stock. According

to Guiches, Murat's impetuous career was the result of his love for his wife Caroline and, again, his story of Murat's rapid rise in the army, his contacts with Napoleon Bonaparte, the limitless fire of his ambition, the rewards from Bonaparte for services rendered and most of all the chequered path of his passion for Caroline, make this yet another novel full of movement and vigour which seemed destined for the cinema screen. This view was expressed in 1936 by Henri Austruy.<sup>28</sup>

General Pierre Keller called this work "un simple divertissement de lettré,"<sup>29</sup> but Guiches did in fact make every effort to turn it into a film, to no avail.<sup>30</sup>

Guiches eloquently conjures up the vitality in the personalities of both Murat and Caroline. Napoleon Bonaparte and the other figures of history stand in the wings of the story as part of the framework of manoeuvre and intrigue around the lives of these two headstrong people. The background of political scandal which at one time surrounded Caroline is reminiscent of the scandalous conduct which appears in La Tueuse:

Mais ne sachant rien entreprendre sans le pousser à l'excès et stimulée par le succès qui adoptait, d'enthousiasme, ses plus risquées hardiesses, elle lança la cour à Fontainebleau d'un tel train, sur une telle folie d'amusements qu'elle la déchaîna dans le dévergondage. Des scandales éclatèrent. Mme Junot surprit son mari en plein amour avec la jeune femme d'un officier de marine et, malgré sa liaison presque publique avec Metternich, peut-être pour s'assurer une excuse, elle n'hésita pas à faire un attroupement et à pousser des cris qu'entendit l'Empereur. (La Vie Amoureuse de Murat, p.133)

Caroline Bonaparte is the last of the line of Guiches' heroines who exhibit a stubborn independence and determination. Murat is the last of Guiches' heroes, driven by a vital sense of destiny and the need to bask in their personal glory.

When Murat exclaims:

Qu'est-ce qu'ils diront de ça à la Bastide?  
Le père! La mère! Tous! Tout le village!  
surtout cette stupide Mion, qu'il avait honte,  
à présent, d'avoir aimée et qui ne faisait  
pas de différence entre un garde-champêtre  
et un chef d'escadrons! Hé bé! qu'est-ce  
que vous dites de ça, vous autres? De ce  
petit garnement de sabots qui pataugeait  
dans l'écurie de l'auberge, parti soldat de  
la Bastide, devenu général et épousant la  
sœur de Bonaparte! (p.52)

We are reminded of so many of Guiches' characters but especially Guiches himself who had set off for Paris forty-nine years earlier to make his name as a writer and had been very anxious to impress his parents with his success.



(ii) An unpublished novel - Pile (1935)<sup>31</sup>

Of all his contemporaries Guiches was the one who probably enjoyed the reputation of indulging least in the excesses of Naturalism. His vinegrowers in L'Ennemi, for all their bitterness and stubbornness, never for a moment return to the rule of primordial urges which characterizes Zola's peasants in La Terre. The doctrine of the suitability of sexual licence in literature, propounded by Zola and adopted by so many of his disciples, seemed to leave Guiches relatively untouched. This is not to say that the pages of his novels and short stories are entirely free from such matters. Indeed, most of his work deals with the relations between men and women and, since the close study of the emotions of the individual in society are an essential part of Guiches' literary production, sexual passion and ambition have a necessary place. Occasionally, however, the sexual proclivities of his characters lean so perilously close to the original and extreme as to risk scandalising some of his readers. Jayan's memories of an earlier attack of venereal disease and his sensual vision of Esther ravaged by the same scourge shocked at least one critic of L'Ennemi.<sup>32</sup>

Philippe Destal, recapturing and savouring the memory of his late wife's love-making by listening outside his second wife's door to her making love with her lover, is another instance of unusual facets of sexual behaviour which came from Guiches' pen. These isolated examples are not, in fact, so divorced from the rest of Guiches' thinking. The sexual wiles of men and women are a fairly constant theme in his short stories, with their humorous satire on modern society's cynical attitude to marriage and fidelity. His first novel, moreover, had Céleste Prudhomat deliberately making herself pregnant by



another man in order to force her lover to marry her and finally an unsuspected admirer attempts to ravish her dead body.

Frankness and boldness in the treatment of sexual matters was, therefore, never entirely absent from Guiches' work, but they did not play such a predominant and explicit role as in some writers' work. It is for this reason that Guiches had a reputation for moderation. It comes as something of a surprise, therefore, to find in his very last and unpublished novel, a frank and uncompromising study of homosexuality. Pile, in which the distinction is made between the "pilards" and the "façards", was finished in 1935, just before he died. Its controversial subject and the either intended or accidental resemblance of one of its main characters to a living person, persuaded Guiches' advisers that its publication was undesirable. One of these was Jean Pagès, his nephew, who told me himself that he read the typescript and that he considered it unsuitable for publication as a well-known newspaper proprietor might recognise himself.

Undoubtedly, Guiches' closest friends and advisers were rather surprised and embarrassed by the subject. It may be that this was the reason for their disrecommendation. In the 1970s, in a different moral and literary climate, the novel may be seen in a different light. Had he lived, Guiches may well have disregarded his advisers, anyway, as Gide did over the publication of Corydon in 1924. He was certainly still working on his novel shortly before his death. If he had succeeded in having it published, he would undoubtedly have surprised his public, for it not only ran counter to the safe, uncontroversial pattern of his recent novels, it was also an unlikely break with tradition for a seventy-five year old

"maître".

The novel is interesting from a number of viewpoints. To begin with, despite the controversial nature of its subject, there is a fundamental autobiographical element. The basic story is one that recurs in so many of Guiches' novels. In this case it concerns two young men who attend a Catholic school in Flottes, a thinly disguised Cahors, and who, on gaining their baccalauréat, move to Paris to further their ambitions. On this straightforward and familiar backcloth, Guiches superimposes two completely new elements. First, the more dynamic of the two young men is a compulsive homosexual. The novel relates his efforts, alternately patient and impetuous, to induce his heterosexual friend to respond physically to his affectionate devotion. Secondly, unlike the earlier autobiographical and literary precedents in Guiches' life and work, the two young heroes do not set off for the capital envisaging a long, hard, patient struggle. On the contrary, Réno, the leader, is already a millionaire and, during their train journey to Paris, where he plans to be the business manager of his writer friend and the architect of his success, he negotiates, according to plan, the purchase of an important interest in an influential newspaper, thanks to a chance encounter on the train with a newspaper director with similar homosexual proclivities.

Herein lies the dual interest of the novel; the development of the portrait and analysis of homosexuality, on the one hand, and the exposé of the world of newspaper publishing on the other, both linked and united in the central character of Réno Dossun. His friend, François Logeur, the sensitive

writer and orthodox human being, is a colourless character by comparison. Guiches has invested all the vitality and potential menace in the character of Réno. He dominates the novel with his obsessions, his ambitions and his problems. He is portrayed as a charming and attractive young man, who wins all hearts, while underneath he is a slave to a vice which drives him to corrupt all the boys in school and outside, who attract him. He has the reputation of a generous youth who gives to organisations protecting the poor. In reality, it is a cover for his ceaseless search for young boys. He has been expelled from three schools and only his mother's powers of persuasion and her money have enabled her to find another school to take him. His love for her is the third dominating passion of his life, but she is horrified by her son's ways and sees his friendship for François Logeur as his only redeeming feature.

Guiches, underneath this story of ambition and deviation, has portrayed the classical internal struggle of the hero against his fate. Réno is aware of the demon within him which he cannot control and which, he is afraid, may destroy him and others:

Je porte en moi un mal qui s'est développé.  
Un mal moral, une sorte de démon qui me  
harcelle, qui me torture, qui menace ma vie,  
la tienne aussi. (Manuscript of Pile, p.7)

He seeks help from confession to a newly arrived priest. With the help of the priest, Guiches analyses the tortuous predicament that fate or heredity have wrought on Réno Dossun.

After reviving echoes of Phèdre pursued by her guilty love and doomed to destruction, Guiches now invokes a biblical parallel in his account of how Réno first became aware of his

affliction at the age of eight, while clinging to a tree in the garden of his house. The parallel of the Garden of Eden is implicit in this, suggesting as it does that what happened here was a natural phenomenon, even though generally regarded as unnatural:

Il s'offrait à moi comme l'arbre de la science et il me révélait la volupté que je pouvais obtenir de mon corps! Un arbre! Et on dit que j'ai des goûts contre nature. (p.14)

We are told how Dossun's friend rejected his advances, but a year later others did not. Guiches pursues his analysis of the attraction:

Et aussitôt je sentais que ma vie quittait mon cerveau, désertait mon cœur et reflétait toute palpitante et furieuse au centre de moi-même. (p.16)

The initially hostile priest becomes sympathetic; clearly an example we are intended to follow. As he encourages Dossun to tell his story, Guiches' intention to explore the predicament of the homosexual becomes increasingly apparent. His method is a combination of mythology and modern psychological analysis:

L'arbre de la science m'avait donné la sève empoisonné (...) Le vice était implanté en moi et jamais plus il ne me quitterait. (p.14)

This not very scientific explanation is followed by factual details of Dossun's early adventure with a precocious girl cousin, after the manner of a psychologist's case history. His unhappy experience with her confirms him in his first preferences. What soon begins to distress him, however, is that his "co-disciples" grow out of this stage of growing up as soon as they are fifteen years of age and begin to turn their attentions to the opposite sex. What is more, they are ashamed of what they have been doing.

Dossun's reaction is significant: "Je suis donc un être à part, un infirme, un fou? Peut-être!" (p.19) He asks his mother if it can be a vice he has inherited. She assures him it is not. Doctors, when consulted, smile and tell him that he will grow out of it. He is, therefore, left alone with the knowledge of his abnormality, which begins to horrify him. In an effort to force himself on to the right path, he compels himself to seek the company of women. However, as he has neither the inclination nor the patience to allow a normal relationship to develop with a woman, he seeks them out where they are most easily accessible:

Alors les bas-fonds de la crapulerie et de l'obscénité. Je n'y trouvai que le vice bourgeois, plus ignoble que l'autre par son hypocrisie, le vice à collet relevé qui se couple, la nuit dans les ruelles des chambres, la crasse des draps et la souillure des corps! Horreur! J'en ai vomi de dégoût! (p.20)

By comparison with this, Dossun cannot believe that his love for his friend is blameworthy. For Guiches' lengthy examination of Dossun's homosexuality has two purposes. It investigates, boldly and with a good deal of objective sympathy, the facet of society and morality which at that time was not much discussed or written about. It also presents to the reader the nature of Dossun's affection for his friend, Logeur, and the torment caused by the latter's failure to reciprocate. Guiches' sympathy for Dossun's agony, however, does not extend to condoning his practises. Through the priest, Achard, we are reminded, with Dossun, of the fate which awaits those of his persuasion:

Imaginez donc ça, la tapette de soixante ans, le vice en robe de chambre! La

débauche en pantoufles. (...) Un ramassis de malheureux malades, quelques-uns congénitaux, d'autres contaminés. Des détraqués incurables, des maniaques exaspérés, des ratés de l'amour, des débauchés impénitents. (p.21)

Dossun, afterwards, mocks at Achard's advice that he should turn his attention to women. There is no simple cure for him. But the immediate problem which arises is François Logeur's love for a local girl. Dossun's plans are that he and Logeur shall go to Paris, to work together. His friend's love for Marcelle is an intolerable interference in his plans and an unthinkable rival for Logeur's affections. By skilful manipulation of some facts about Marcelle's mother and François' father, of which François was unaware, Dossun manages to persuade him to break with Marcelle but not before Dossun's almost demented anger at Logeur's protestations of true love has revealed the dangerous tightrope on which they are walking: "Vous criez l'un après l'autre comme des bêtes en chaleur. Saligauds que vous êtes! (...) Tu n'es qu'un salaud! Un misérable ingrat! (...) Ah! tiens! Tiens, je t'étranglerais! Si cette saloperie-là ne me cassait les reins et me foutait par terre sous le coup d'une douleur atroce, je t'étranglerais si les sanglots ne m'étranglaient moi-même." (p.46)

Réno has won his first battle. Marcelle, whose mother, François now knows, was the mistress of his late father, is now rejected. In order to consolidate his position, Réno realises he must give François something to take Marcelle's place and keep him occupied until they go to Paris together. His solution is to introduce François to the town brothel. Réno's affection for his friend is deep and sincere, but it cannot be complete for him until it also satisfies his physical need. For this he is prepared to wait, estimating



that his generosity and his plans to spend money launching François on a literary career will eventually bring their reward. The novel tells how nearly successful he is in his strategy and how, and with what predictable ferocity, he reacts when Marcelle reappears and wins François back from him at the last moment.

The novel contains two remarkable episodes. The first, reminiscent of La Maison Tellier of Maupassant, is the brothel scene. This chapter, entitled *La Petite Famille*, describes the familiar scene of gaiety and pleasure under the capable and motherly eye of its "madame". Madame Amable is a regular attender at mass and the house is portrayed as a happy human retreat from the cares of the world:

C'est exclusivement au "17" que, chaque nuit, les clients citadins viennent se délasser du travail, des soucis de ménage, de la monotonie de la vie conjugale. Se reposer de s'être une journée entière, contraints à se montrer corrects et vertueux. S'accorder enfin quelques bonnes heures d'agrément et de sincérité dans le commerce galant de femmes peu vêtues. (p.58)

The atmosphere is joyful. Madame Amable has placed a bell by the door for the use of one of her customers who is anxious not to be seen. Unfortunately, he is short-sighted. He usually has to be shown where it is and the girls hang all sorts of kitchen utensils on the bell wire so that his attempts to be discreet are unsuccessful. The other regulars, who arrive later, include a former mayor of the town, a nurseryman and a theologian who asserts that: "l'homme ne pèche qu'avec la permission de Dieu."

François, whom Réno has taken there in a desperate effort to keep him away from Marcelle, finds both the girls and the atmosphere intoxicating. His enthusiasm does not please



Réno but it is irrepresible:

Peloté par des mains farfouilleuses qui caressaient tout en faisant les poches, chapardant cigarettes, bonbons et même la monnaie, il se débattait riant et excité par ces assauts de bras, de jambes qui l'étreignaient comme pour grimper à un mât de cocagne. Fiévreusement il palpaît, évaluait, expertisait, et, tout à coup, son choix fait, il entourait la taille de la préférée et l'entraînait hors du groupe. (p.76)

Réno takes a carbine to the house to help Madame Amable get rid of the rats. Unfortunately, to her great annoyance, they reappear in the cellar. As their baccalauréat examination draws nearer, Réno and François, study hard at Réno's house until the early hours and on their free days they continue their studies at the brothel. Réno practises his German with Freyda, a German girl, and François his Spanish with Carmen.

Guiches succeeds in conveying the effervescent happiness of this well-run "house" with its family atmosphere. However, Guiches' brothel is to witness different scenes from Mau-passant's, and the episode ends on a jarring note for François. Réno decides to hold an end of term celebration for all his friends at number "17". With the connivance of the girls and some of the boys, he plans to turn it into a revival of their "dormitory games", as an excuse to make physical advances to François. In the event, François reacts violently and with revulsion. It is a crisis in their relationship. François' mother, believing that Réno has saved her son from involvement with the hated Marcelle, persuades him not to break with Réno.

The second remarkable episode is a visit made by François to the homosexual underworld, to find out what it is that has so conquered Réno and occupied his evenings and nights

so regularly since their arrival in Paris. In the chapter entitled *Ces Messieurs-Dames*, François hears first about a handsome young man who changed hands for four hundred thousand francs, together with his mother. At the party he attends, accompanied by a guide, a near-naked young man finishes his dance and then all uncommitted observers leave. The remainder form couples. François is introduced to several of them, learning of their affairs and their problems. Until that evening François believed that Réno and the newspaper director, Mauroux, were rare exceptions, but here he is being initiated into an abnormal world whose existence he has not suspected. There are hundreds at the party:

Tous séduisants, dévoués et traîtres tour à tour, maniant la caresse, le couteau, le revolver ou le poison. Ils se sentent par le vice inavouable, tapis au fond d'eux-mêmes, condamnés à une hypocrisie grâce à laquelle ils se faufilent dans toutes les carrières, tous les pays du monde, Arts, Sciences, Lettres, Politique, Commerce. Dans les Littératures qui s'en amusent, les armées les tolèrent, la justice qui les juge et la religion qui les absout! (pp.181-182)

François finds himself intrigued by these vivacious people and by the way they talk; he is particularly impressed by one young man who calls him "maître".

This elegant setting, the friendliness of those present and the way they seem to understand and admire his work make a deep impression on François and he is in danger of coming under their hypnotic influence. Guiches seems to be suggesting that this corruption is so insidious as to easily ensnare the curious and unsuspecting bystander. On the other hand he describes so precisely the behaviour, appearance and dress of the participants that it would normally be quite impossible to identify oneself with them. François'

vulnerability arises from his utter dependance on Réno and his desire to please him. As soon as he finds Marcelle again this abnormal influence falls away.

We, inevitably, ask ourselves the question: why did Guiches choose to write about this subject? The answer can only be that he saw evidence of its existence and that he found it to be a valid literary subject. It may well be that he encountered adherents of this persuasion in the course of his career, perhaps in the world of journalism, which he knew well. It is undoubtedly remarkable that, at the age of seventy-five, when his success and output were waning, he should have decided to brave the censorship of his friends and to be bolder and more outspoken than ever before. Perhaps he hoped in this way to attract the attention of the public which he had not succeeded in conquering convincingly for about twenty years.

It is also relevant to consider whether the story might have been planned or indeed written earlier, although there is no reference to it in any of Guiches' notebooks, which span most of his career.<sup>33</sup> The story starts in 1894 and the atmosphere and the world it describes belong to that period. The men of literature revered by Réno and François belong to that time also. It was, of course, a period that Guiches remembered well. His memoirs had dwelt affectionately on the events and the writer's world of those days. Furthermore, the subject of homosexuality among newspaper editors was better set in a comparatively remote period, to avoid possible identification with any practising journalist of 1935. But there is so much of Guiches' own experience in this novel that its setting is undoubtedly a very important factor.

In a multitude of ways the novel is something of an exercise in nostalgia. For the last time he relives his school days, the boarding school with the 'pions', the rowdiness of the boys, occasionally the rebellious reaction to authority. Perhaps his affection for his own mother is reflected in François Logeur's devotion to Berthe Logeur. The fact that both the boys' mothers in the novel are widows may well be a confirmation of Guiches' enduring regard for his mother and, by omission, of his continuing absence of feeling for his late father. Like Guiches, François has to return to Flottes for his mother's funeral.

At each stage of the first train journey from Flottes to Paris, after a familiar leave-taking scene at the station Guiches seems to be lingering affectionately over the countryside he himself had travelled through when he first left Albas for Paris, and many times since. While Réno discusses his ambitions with the newspaper director, Mauroux, François looks out of the window, observing with a nostalgic eye more appropriate to Guiches perhaps than to his hero:

les châtaigniers du limousin, un carroussel de vaches noires et blanches jouant aux dominos sur le tapis vert d'un herbage. Les gambades et les ruades d'un poulain, un château romantique à la pointe d'un roc, un village au fond d'un ravin, des bois qui fuyaient à l'horizon comme des troupeaux affolés; au-dessus d'une église une cloche qui se balance et que l'on n'entend pas, les villas avec les jardinets de banlieue, et, tout à coup, vlan, en pleine figure, tout un amphithéâtre de vieilles maisons, escaladant un coteau, au fond une rivière enjambée de ponts, sillonnée de batelets, frangée de pêcheurs à la ligne et là-haut une sombre cathédrale comme amputée d'une tour, et qui lève vers ou contre le ciel son unique et rigide bras noir: Limoges. (p.122)

Other familiar scenes along the railway route follow in succession, Argentan, Châteauroux, Paris. Not only the scenery is remembered. Guiches echoes the message of his memoirs of ten years earlier. Through the words of Mauroux he refers to the agonies and ordeals of the ambitious writer in those early years:

On y tue, on s'y tue! On y meurt de  
misère et de faim, comme du temps de  
Villon, de Mürger et de Gérard de  
Nerval. (p.118)

Guiches' more recent personal experiences are also reflected. In particular, François, listening to Réno's predictions of a brilliant future and looking at the Académie Française building, expresses these doubts which are an ironic reference to Guiches' own disappointed hopes:

Quelque chose me dit que je ne serai jamais  
un officiel, ni Académicien ni Président  
de Société Littéraire, membre de jurys et  
que je serai toujours un travailleur en  
chambre. (p.141)

Réno vehemently rejects this prediction and attacks the fate which has, in fact, been that of Gustave Guiches himself:

Pas de ça! Pas de Tour d'Ivoire! La  
Tour d'Ivoire, c'est la tour des pendus!  
Pas de solitude!;...L'Ecriture l'a dit:  
"Malheur à celui qui est seul! (p.141)

It is as if Guiches, in looking back on his life, was indulging for a moment in make-believe, remaking the past in a mould that might have been. Instead of his struggle to obtain recognition, instead of the often lone and withdrawn writer, who worked in isolation in his study, he now imagines a brilliant success story, thanks to a financial backing which does not falsify the writer's talent, but does give him the full and unfettered opportunity to fulfil himself, free from

the often disheartening necessity to sell himself. Furthermore, François, his counterpart, can look forward to enthusiastic reviews from the critics, not only because of his talent, but because the wealth and influence of his patron ensures a favourable reception.

What seems, in some respects, an idealistic picture of a writer's fortunes may be seen as a sardonic glimpse of the facile success of some modern writers due to money or influence rather than to talent. Guiches had already written on this theme in Le Petit Lancrit, 1921. In Pile, this cry from the author's heart is accompanied by an indictment, not particularly of the morals of newspaper directors, but of the way that writers are manipulated or discarded by them, frequently at the slightest provocation, and by an indication of the way that newspapers might develop their reporting and presentation to offer a better service to the public. Here again, Guiches was on familiar ground. Even as a young man in the world of journalism he had ideas of his own on what a good newspaper should offer.<sup>34</sup>

Other aspects of Guiches' life make an appearance in the novel. Mauroux's house is luxuriously decorated with items of a sensual nature, including works by artists who had illustrated some of Guiches' books, "de prodigieuses obscénités de Rops", and "les plus sanglantes parisienneries de Forain." Elsewhere, Guiches quotes from his late friend Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and he lists among the writers whom François Logeur meets, those whom he himself had met many years earlier. The action is chiefly centred in the 9<sup>e</sup> arrondissement. Réno and François set themselves up in a flat near the Place de Clichy. This is the part of Paris

where Guiches himself lived, in the rue d'Amsterdam. Like Guiches, François has a panoramic view over the rooftops of Paris. Marcelle, whom François meets again unexpectedly in Paris, is working as a shopgirl in a "Maison de Grande Couture" in the Boulevard Haussman. Before they married, Guiches' wife had worked in her father's outfitter's shop near the Opéra. Marcelle and François find themselves a flat in the rue de Mauberge, also in the 9<sup>o</sup> arrondissement.

In spite of the number of autobiographical elements contained in it, however, the novel itself is far from being an autobiography. Guiches had no such benefactor as Réno, nor did he serve in the French army during the First World War. François returns from the war with a high reputation, earned as a writer in the front line. Although Réno had hoped to put an end to his literary career after he married Marcelle, the young couple and their child managed to survive on Marcelle's meagre earnings as a shopgirl. The last part of the novel is dominated by Réno's virulent hatred of Marcelle for taking François from him and by his determination not only to sever every connection with François, but also to ensure that no one else will publish his work. When François returns from the war a hero, Réno realises he has lost his battle to ruin him, a battle waged with the sole purpose of forcing François to come back to him. Having lost him for good, Réno poisons himself.

For all its controversiality and the distastefulness of its subject, Pile is an interesting novel. It recalls L'Imprévu to the extent that its theme is one man's attempt



to control and direct the life of another, an attempt which results, in both novels, in anguished disorientation for the would-be controller. In Pile, however, the conclusion is less contrived and more satisfactory. Réno continues to pursue his life of intense debauchery while waiting for François to capitulate. When this does not happen, he gives him back his peace and freedom and ends his own life.

There are many honourable precedents for the account of the friendship of two young men. In recent years Anouilh's Becket has explored the strong attachment between two men which can, when thwarted, have momentous consequences. In Guiches' story, however, the relationship is different. These are very young men, characterised principally by an enormous enthusiasm for life. The interest of the novel lies mainly in the dichotomy of society and the world of pleasure into two opposing camps, represented by Réno's love for François and François' love for Marcelle, then by the brothel, with its friendly gaiety, and the haunts of the homosexuals, with friendship and pleasure of a more engulfing kind. The novel would have shocked many of its readers, but Guiches would undoubtedly have argued that his story was moral, as it indicates unmistakably and repeatedly the dangers of homosexuality.

In style, this last novel follows the direction taken by his writing in the later years of his life. Descriptive passages are few and fairly brief. Dialogue plays a larger role. From his days in the theatre his prose had become more dramatic. This had always been a feature to some extent, but Guiches now seemed to see the action and speech of his characters in terms of a stage performance. Hence the

excited apostrophes of Mauroux and Réno in the scene after the latter's break with François, just one example, among many, of the exclamatory style, expressing enthusiasm or horror:

Tu es fou! protesta Mauroux, c'est abominable!  
 je le sais, c'est une souffrance horrible!  
 Souffre! mon vieux! Souffre ton saoul!  
 Pleure! Sanglotte! Gueule! Mais pas de  
 désespoir! Tu t'es attaqué à l'imprenable!  
 Il a horreur de ça ce garçon, maintenant  
 tu le sais! Fais-toi une raison! Reprends-  
 toi!....  
 - Jamais je ne pourrai, gémissait Réno, ne  
 plus le voir! Ne plus l'entendre! Ne plus  
 le savoir près de moi! ne plus pouvoir  
 échanger nos sentiments, nos amitiés, nos  
 haines, nos admirations, nos souvenirs,  
 même nos discussions, même nos disputes!  
 Il n'est plus là! C'est fini! Je suis tout  
 seul! Je me fiche de tout! Alors que ce soit  
 tantôt, ce soir ou cette nuit, c'est décidé,  
 je n'y couperai pas!.... (p.258)

Guiches' skill with words, both visual and rhythmic, is still in evidence. Describing François and Réno out riding on their days out of school, the jogging rhythm is unmistakable:

Ils faisaient de longues promenades à  
 cheval culottés de daim, bottés de cuir  
 Luisant, le camélia ou l'œillet à la  
 boutonnière, traversant la ville au pas  
 ou au grand trot rythmé par le carillon  
 d'argent des mors et des gourmettes,  
 salués par des regards d'envie ou des  
 sourires flatteurs, ils passaient, graves,  
 ayant la conscience de leur importance  
 et la notion de leur chic. (p.28)

If, in recent years, Guiches' language had become increasingly dramatic, there were other related aspects which were both a reminder of earlier work and an indication of a new stage of development. Réno's bitter outburst of blasphemy after his explosive scene with François is strongly reminiscent of Chavasseur's similar outburst in L'Ennemi, approximately fifty years earlier:

La tête renversée, les yeux en défi,  
poings fermés et bras levés contre l'ennemi  
invisible, il vomissait en colonnes d'ordures  
les plus ignobles blasphèmes que sa haine et  
sa folie furieuse s'évertuaient à inventer.  
"Salop! Cochon! Misérable! Bourreau! Votre  
puissance n'est que la lâcheté! (...)  
Moi; insecte! Moi, rien du tout! Méchant  
des méchants! Canaille des canailles!  
Je vous crie ma haine! Mon exécration!  
Je les crache à la face... (p.256)

The difference is in the less restrained language. The boldness of the subject has brought with it an intensification of expression and a heightening of tension which replace the heavy creative writing of the early work. The character of Réno is portrayed through his language as wilful and dangerously unbalanced when his plans are frustrated. The combination of exclamatory style and violent language emphasises the almost demented state of his mind. After the break with François he decides on a night of debauchery:

De la belle charogne! Que ça pue! Que ça  
grouille! Que ça rutile! Qu'on fasse les  
cannibales et qu'on morde dans la bidoche  
d'homme, tandis que ce foutriquet d'amoureux  
se pâmera sur des blancs de volaille... (p.264)

This seems a long way from the gentle image Guiches had won for himself over the years and yet the declamatory style was personally his own and belonged much more to the literary period of his heyday than it did to the mid 1930s. This novel, indeed, in spite of the boldness of its subject, belongs, in mood as well as setting, to the very early years of the twentieth century. It would not be surprising to discover that he had conceived it then and had only found the courage to write it at a later date. In 1935, it was the most interesting and controversial novel he had written since La Tueuse which had won the Prix Toirac in 1921.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Les Deux Soldats, Paris, E. Fasquelle, 1917, p.289.
2. Guiches relates in his memoirs how Léon Guitry had been surprised to hear he was from Quercy: "Sans blague, vous, parisien militant, vous êtes de Cahors?" Le Spectacle, Paris, Editions Spes, 1932, p.74.
3. Le Spectacle, p.200.
4. In a passage which links up with the theme of La Tueuse, (1921) Guiches refers to the corrupting effect of Paris: "Ce n'était pas l'appétit qui m'était venu, c'était les appétits! Artistes ou hommes politiques assaillis par le succès, à peine débarqués à Paris, voilà ce qui nous tue!" Les Deux Soldats, p.4.
5. Les Deux Soldats, p.8. General Pierre Keller points out that Guiches referred to his house at Camy as "la maison qui regarde." Op.cit., p.276.  
In my conversations with General Keller in August, 1972, at Camy, he told me that the story was based on an episode which happened to Guiches himself and that the young soldier whose place he took was still alive.
6. Henri Austruy, op.cit., p.92.
7. En Vacances, Paris, J. Férenczi et Fils, 1924, p.3.
8. In an address on the occasion of Guiches' promotion to the grade of Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, reported in Le Figaro, 30 March, 1929.
9. L'Homme qui parle, Paris, Delalain, 1920, p.100.
10. Le Tremplin, Paris, Renault-Lévy, 1919.
11. Le Banquet, p.231.
12. Au Banquet de la Vie, p.110.
13. Le Tremplin, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, 1919, pp.7-8.
14. Clemenceau and the Third Republic, J. Hampden Jackson, Hodder and Stoughton, 1946, p.84.
15. Guiches was critical of the public's hostility to Gambetta in Cahors in 1880 and also of the crowd's behaviour at his funeral in 1886: "Et ce grouillement qui de plus en plus devient un tumulte de fête est si écœurant que j'aime mieux m'en aller." Au Banquet de la Vie, p.114.

In his 'nouvelle' Cent deux ans, first published in the Revue Bleue in 1887, Vol. XIII, and later forming part of the collection of short stories Au Fil de la Vie, P. Ollendorff, 1895, Guiches tells of the gullibility and the damaging power of public opinion in the making or unmaking of a man's reputation.

16. Le Banquet, pp.103-4.
17. La Tueuse, Paris, J. Ferenczi et Fils, 1921.
18. Le Banquet, 'Huysmans à son Bureau', p.104.
19. Tout se paye, Hachette, Bibliothèque Verte, Nouvelle Bibliothèque d'Education et de Récréation, 1928.
20. La Part d'Amour, Paris, Bibliothèque-Charpentier, Fasquelle Editeurs, 1930.
21. Le Tremplin, Paris, Renault Lévy, 1919.
22. La Tueuse, Paris, J. Férenczi et Fils, 1921, p.192.
23. La Part d'Amour, Paris, Fasquelle, 1930, p.162.
24. Stephen Ullmann - Style in the French Novel, C.U.P., 1957, Chapter II, p.102.
25. La Tueuse, p.187.
26. Au Banquet de la Vie, Paris, Editions Spes, 1925, p.236 where Guiches describes Anatole France's article in La Vie Littéraire as "une des plus hautes, des plus fortes et des plus resplendissantes pages que la divine langue de France ait jamais enfantées!"
27. La Vie Amoureuse de Murat, Paris, E. Flammarion, 1930.
28. Henri Austruy, op.cit., p.248.
29. Pierre Keller, op.cit., p.275.
30. See Appendix A (ix) for letters from la Princesse Murat on this subject.
31. I am greatly indebted to Madame Henri Bourboulon, cousin of the late Mademoiselle Guiches and niece of Gustave Guiches, for the loan of the unpublished manuscript and typescript of Pile. The typescript consists of two hundred and eighty-six quarto pages. After the death of Guiches' daughter, Marguerite Guiches, in 1975, I was invited by Madame Mimi Bourboulon, niece of Gustave Guiches, and Monsieur Jean Pagès, his nephew, to examine the papers, documents and manuscripts which were in her apartment and which had belonged to her father. I had already, on an earlier occasion, at the invitation of Mademoiselle Guiches and Monsieur Pagès, examined a number of manuscripts, but on this later occasion

I was able to discover, among other things, the manuscript and typescript of this last novel.

32. Francis Maratuech wrote in Le Feu Follet: "l'on s'arrête brusquement éccœuré, comme si sur le fond d'un Corot on apercevait quelque chose de grouillant et de hideux faisant tache." (Vol. 5, 1887-8)
  
33. In a letter to his goddaughter, Sophie, and her husband, Marc Stambart, dated 18 March, 1934, Guiches wrote with obvious awareness of the delicacy of his subject: "Quant à moi, m'étant remis à mon roman Pile, la plus élémentaire prudence me recommande la réserve envers les messieurs. Alors je me borne à serrer, de toutes les forces de mon amitié les mains de Marc, après avoir embrassé de toute mon affection les joues de ma filleule Sophie." On the other hand, an undated page of notes for Pile, in Guiches' hand and found among his papers, containing examples of the characteristics of homosexuals, could, judging by its comparative legibility, have been written much earlier.
  
34. Guiches' papers contained an undated draft in his hand of a letter to the director of the Revue Hebdomadaire, in which Un Cœur Discret appeared. Probably writing in 1891 or 1892 Guiches was returning the proofs of his novel and at the same time making a suggestion for a new development in the Revue: "la création dans une rubrique permanente d'un courrier bibliographique fait en petites notes serrées, tel que celui de M. Brunetière sur la couverture de la Revue des Deux Mondes." Guiches asked that, if his idea was accepted, he might be allowed to edit the feature. The date of the letter, although there is no indication as to whether or not it was sent, must have been 1891-2. See Appendix A(v).



Guiches and the Theatre(i) Au Mois de Mai, (1888) and Snob (1897)

Guiches' professional interest in the theatre dates from his early days in Paris, when, together with a play by Henri Lavedan, his one-act play Au mois de mai was performed at the Théâtre Libre on 28 March 1888, under the collective title of Les Quarts d'Heure.

He claims in his memoirs<sup>1</sup> that he was by nature a dramatist before he was a novelist. At the age of twelve at the Collège in Cahors he wrote a one-act play, La porte du Nord, which was performed before an invited audience at the house of one of the pupils. The play's success was marred by the tantrums of one of its young actors. He tells us also that he spent most of his evenings at the theatre in Paris between 1882 and 1884.

His first full-length play was written in 1887, at the age of twenty-seven, after the publication of Céleste Prudhomat, and was entitled Consciences. He ambitiously submitted the play, which was in four acts, to the Comédie Française. It was rejected first by Edouard Cadol on behalf of the Comédie Française, and then, on appeal, by Jules Claretie, Administrator Général of the Comédie Française. Guiches later defended his ambitions attempt to have the play accepted by the Comédie Française by saying that in the contemporary climate nowhere else would his play even have been read, since theatre directors had, in 1887, decreed that novelists were incapable of writing for the theatre and should confine themselves to their own genre. Furthermore, the established dramatists themselves jealously guarded their territory and made it difficult for newcomers to have their plays



performed.

Guiches' experience was far from unique. Many of his contemporary writers had found the same resistance. Even Flaubert, Zola and the Goncourts had no success with their plays. It was Antoine's Théâtre Libre<sup>2</sup> which came to their rescue and enabled the theatre to break new ground. This new venture, which gave its first programme of plays by established Naturalist novelists on 30 March 1887, arrived at exactly the right moment for Guiches.

The subject of the first of his plays to be performed Au mois de mai, was suggested by one of the chapters of his novel L'Ennemi<sup>3</sup>. An engaged couple Léon and Blanche are discussing their plans for their honeymoon. Since his health is poor he thinks of the warm countries of the Mediterranean. She, beautiful and of robust health, rejects the idea of the sun and the heat and presses the advantages of the Northern fjords and winter sports. He accepts, and the contrast between them and their differing appetites becomes more and more apparent. When her handsome and athletic young cousin arrives at the end to announce that the horses are ready for them to go riding, without her fiancé, the bitter prospect for the latter's hopes of an idyllic marriage are seen to be patently and cruelly doomed.

In the characteristic Naturalist vein of pessimism, Guiches' play was eminently suited to Antoine's new theatre and was well received. The play was slight, however, and its characters thinly drawn. The main attraction of the evening was that the plays being performed were by the notorious

authors of the Manifeste des Cinq; La Pelote by Paul Bonnetain, Pierrot, Assassin de sa femme, by Paul Margueritte and Entre Frères by Henri Lavedan. All these plays emphasised the same inevitable disillusionment with life which was expected of them. None were substantial enough to enhance their reputations as Naturalists, or to establish for them a reputation as dramatists.

Guiches was already thinking of another play, again based on his novel L'Ennemi. He read his play to Lucien Guitry on 7 November 1895, at Maurice Donnay's house in the Boulevard Péreire. The theme, the effect of phylloxera on people's consciences, quickly convinced Guitry that it was not suitable for his theatre, the Renaissance, and he urged Guiches to read it to Antoine. Guitry's advice was undoubtedly sincere. He was genuinely interested in helping Guiches to succeed as a dramatist, as he proved when he invited Guiches to submit a different play for him to produce at the Renaissance Theatre.

This meeting with Lucien Guitry was a turning point in Guiches' career in the theatre. The two men were drawn to one another and their families became close friends. Guitry's son Sacha and Guiches' daughter Marguerite would play together while their fathers discussed Guiches' plays. Guitry took great pains to nurture Guiches' dramatic skills and to give him every encouragement. His theatre was not like Antoine's, however. Guiches turned his back on the Naturalist theatre and joined the ranks of the writers of the psychological theatre.

In fact, when Guiches read the first Act of Snob to

Guity a few days later, he had not written a genuinely Naturalist novel for eight years. He had turned his attention increasingly to the psychological study of character and social attitudes in his novels and short stories. These were to remain his chief concern throughout his literary career. It was perhaps to be expected that this preoccupation should manifest itself also in his plays. It had been the practice of the Naturalist novelists, however, to dramatise episodes of their novels and this is clearly how Guiches, too, had thought to break into the theatre. Then his meeting with Guity and their subsequent friendship gave him the opportunity to pursue his study of society and human behaviour on the stage. Snob, his first success, provided both a social comment, of the sort he had been making in his stories, and a glimpse of the Parisian society of his day.

Jacques Dangy is a successful novelist and playwright, fêted and admired in Parisian society. Because it has given him his success he accepts the code of society which requires a constant indulgence in insincere flattery, destructive wit and idle dalliance. His wife, Hélène, however, does not share his readiness to compromise with practices which clash with her natural principles of honesty and sincerity. She finds it difficult to take part in the backbiting and character annihilation which are a constant theme among the guests at her house, as elsewhere. She tries loyally to fit in and not to cause offence, but is clearly uncomfortable and is regarded as somewhat naive by the others. She springs to the defence of one of her guests who is mocked by them after he has left, saying she does not want to hear him vilified. She

dislikes being expected to invite people who are in fashion just because it is what others are doing: "J'ai besoin d'imprévu et je ne comprends qu'on se laisse guider dans ses relations par d'autres considérations que l'amitié, l'agrément et l'utilité." (Snob, p.27)

On the other hand she is modest by nature and does not intend to take a stand against the practices with which she disagrees: "Je suis anarchiste d'idées, mais sans aller jusqu'à la propagande par le fait."

When Hélène is asked to act a part in her husband's play she is reluctant to be anything other than her natural self:

Mais qu'on me fasse donc telle que je suis...  
une bonne petite femme, pas compliquée, une  
Parisienne - fin de siècle, si vous voulez,  
mais par naissance. Seulement, pas bien mon-  
daine, élégante juste ce qu'il faut, qui dit  
trop ce qu'elle pense, qui ne sait pas flirter,  
enfin celle que vos grandes amies appellent,  
avec tant de bienveillance, la petite madame  
Dangy ou la petite Dangy tout court... (p.33)

Nonetheless, Hélène, the most convincing of the play's characters, is, in the true tradition of the Guiches heroine, a woman with a mind of her own. Her sincerity and alleged simplicity do not preclude her from an occasional indulgence in malicious gossip or, more importantly, from scheming to win back her husband from his involvement with another woman.

Jacques Dangy is infatuated with the Duchesse de Malmont, who has a role in his next play and who enjoys keeping him dancing to her tune. He is flattered by his success in society and by the attentions of a member of the true aristocracy. His natural loyalty to his wife is eroded by his acceptance of the fashionable display of frivolity and flirtatiousness. We are shown that this is a dangerous code which can threaten the

happiness of a genuine and unsophisticated marriage. For H  l  ne sees society as a constricting and destructive force in their lives. She sees the friendship of her husband for the Duchesse de Malmont and urges her husband to take her away if only for a brief respite. He refuses, then submits, only to change his mind again when his mistress presses him to stay.

The danger is twofold however. For Dangy also refutes his wife's fears over the insistent attentions being paid to her by the Duc de Malmont. He says that she must not reject a man of this standing whose support is so important to Dangy and against whom he has heard no whisper of improper conduct. "Malmont fait son devoir d'homme galant." (p.81)

Malmont's intentions are, however, much more dishonourable than Dangy believes. Malmont invites H  l  ne to his house and pronounces in clear terms, and in a balanced rhythmic prose characteristic of Guiches, the potential threat posed by the frivolous dalliance of the 'homme galant':

Mais souvenez-vous de ceci! Il y a dans la vie de toute femme, une heure, une minute o   le pr  sent l'ennuie... o   elle r  ve d'autre chose... Vous aurez cette minute. Je vous demande alors de penser    moi. (p.102)

H  l  ne protests to her husband that she has tried to help him and to be the sort of woman who is successful in society, but the result of her success has been to be treated like a prostitute by the most respected representative of the Catholic party. None of this however convinces Dangy, who sees only that, if he is to be successful, he has to accept the vagaries of influential people in order to have their support. When he finally hears, however, that H  l  ne has been unfaithful to him, he forgets his own misdemeanours

and bitterly accuses her of destroying their marriage.

Hélène points out that he drove her to it:

Cela vous enchantait, cela vous amusait,  
cela vous flattait (...) Moi, je m'en  
étais humiliée, j'en souffrais...je voyais  
le danger... je vous ai prévenu n'est-ce pas?  
Je vous ai supplié de m'arracher de ce monde  
qui devait finir par nous prendre l'un et  
l'autre. (p.208)

Dangy is finally persuaded of her innocence, however, and, with great relief, now his eyes have been opened, he takes Hélène away from Paris.

The interest of Snob hinges fundamentally on two themes which recur throughout Guiches' literary career in both theatre and novels. The first of these is his preoccupation with society, its follies and its excesses. The second is the effect of his art on the attitudes and behaviour of the writer.

Guiches has recorded in his memoirs his horror that Paris should be viewed by the world as the city of pleasure. We have seen in his novels how he portrayed Paris society as fickle and shallow, where no mother could hope to find an honest and honourable match for her daughter and where no sincere young man from the provinces could hope to find a suitable wife. Snob shows in detail how the members of society are victims of the cynical and shallow round of gossip and idleness which threaten to stifle any breath of genuine sincerity. Even Dangy, despite his willingness to compromise can see this: "Paris est un enfer, on vit double. On perd la notion du juste et de l'injuste(...)"(p.69)

On others the effect of this stifling artificiality, like the effect of phylloxera on the people of Quercy in L'Ennemi

can be disturbing and insidious. H  l  ne's natural kindness is threatened:

Oh! les   tres ennuyeux et inutiles et nuls!  
Toute une apr  s-midi    entendre des riens et  
   en dire - car ils y obligent - Non,   a  
finit par   tre exasp  rant. Vous me connaissez,  
mon petit Juillan, je ne suis pas m  chante,  
n'est-ce pas? Eh bien, je les d  teste. Vrai,  
je leur veux du mal, et ... chaque lundi, je  
demande au bon Dieu de leur faire ce que je  
ne voudrais pas qu'on me f  t. (p.70)

H  l  ne yearns to rediscover the natural country surroundings they once knew. This romantic notion that happiness belongs to unspoiled nature and misery to corrupt society places H  l  ne among the ranks of Guiches' many heroines and heroes like Philippe Destal, Claire de Gizols and Berthe Fraizal, for whom society, both Parisian and, to a lesser degree, provincial, poses a permanent threat to genuine relationships. This na  vet   is derided by Dangy:

(...) nous ne retrouverions plus nous-m  mes,  
(...) tu ne reconna  trais plus rien... les  
champs, les sites eux-m  mes, le bon site!...  
Et la bicyclette a tu   les rosses qui  
figuraient dans nos cavalcades. (p.113)

The happiness they knew is not a safe part of its natural setting. This has changed too. Their happiness depends on themselves not on the peace and beauty of nature. But H  l  ne is concerned that there is no other way:

C'est l   que nous nous sommes laiss  s. Est-ce  
que nous nous retrouvons ici! Tout y est faux,  
b  te et m  chant dans ce monde de cabots, de  
parvenus et de snobs! Vos gens chics, ils  
sont stupides, vicieux et grossiers. (p.114)

Dangy is just beginning to feel a concern for his marriage and the need for tranquility when he learns of H  l  ne's alleged infidelity. He is becoming disquieted by "La folie subite du monde, une gaiet   nerveuse, bruyante, aga  ante parfois." (p.189)



Finally Dangy is delighted to break free of Paris. The last act, which takes place eight years later, shows them living quietly and happily in the provinces near Evreux: "Ah! mon cher, si vous saviez ce que c'est bon la terre! Ce que ça débarrasse des vilaines choses, et des perfides et des trahisons!" (p.233)

This is not so much an eulogy of the qualities of nature, however, as a sharp and clear indictment of the falseness of Parisian society which Guiches depicts in all its cynical emptiness. This he does through his idle aristocrats, the Duc and Duchesse de Malmont and the Baron le Meneur, the malicious envy of writers like Noizay, the sycophancy of old Bègles, an eager pro-royalist, anxious to ingratiate himself with the Duc de Malmont, and the vanity of the Duchesse de Devonshire, who insists on singing for her guests, who ridicule her behind her back.

Hélène's distaste for the behaviour of her guests is amply justified by Guiches' portrait of them. As the play opens his guests are discussing others in their absence and making witty innuendoes about each other in their presence. When Hélène gives them the news that her husband has been awarded the rosette of Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, Le Meneur calls it "Le plus joli des mille riens dans la toilette d'un homme." (p.45)

Nonetheless, Guiches skilfully blends the portrait of insincerity and cynicism with a wit and vigour which give the play considerable impetus and avoid an over-heavy censoriousness.

The Dangy's marriage is obviously in danger when the institution of marriage is regarded with such levity by the very idols of Parisian society. The Duchesse de Malmont

reveals Hélène's infidelity and asks Dangy to persuade Hélène to give her husband back to her, not because she loves him but because she is going to Florence and she hates travelling alone.

The second basic theme which runs through the play concerns the role of the writer. When Juillen tells Dangy he is committing a folly in having an affair with the Duchesse de Malmont, Dangy replies that he must: "Parce que je suis artiste avant d'être époux." (p.137)

Guiches is clearly taking issue with the Goncourt's concept of the supreme importance of authentic experience and documentation. Dangy goes on to express this doctrine explicitly: "Je dois tout voir, tout entendre, connaître le plus possible. Et comment décrirais-je le monde si je n'y fréquentais?"

Juillen tells him he has no right to deceive his wife in the name of psychology. He warns him of the complications and remorse in store for him. To which Dangy replies that he is writing something special "et j'ai besoin de tuyaux sur le remords."

This may perhaps be seen as a frivolous or petulant reply. But Dangy is referred to elsewhere as a disciple of documentation through personal experience. When Hélène recollects the place they fell in love she also recalls his rescuing a girl who was drowning. Dangy tells her "Ah! oui! oui! C'était pour avoir des documents." (p.118)

The link between reality and literature is revealed to be curiously defective, however, when the writer in his own life ignores the lessons he has learned in his profession.

His writer's vision still leaves him blind to its implications for his own marriage. When H  l  ne tells him of the Duc de Malmont's warning that there will come a moment in her life when she will be bored and will need him, Dangy says this is true, as he himself said this in one of his works. Its relevance to his own marriage makes no impact on him. H  l  ne who feels her happiness threatened rebukes him bitterly: "A quoi   a te sert-il alors d'  crire qu'il y a dans la vie de toute femme une heure d'ennui et de vertige? Tu parles de raison, mais c'est toi qui me pousses    ce vertige." (p.155)

Act IV of the play concentrates almost exclusively on the problem of the writer in translating reality into literature. In an unusual climax to the play, Dangy, now an Academician, comes face to face with Noizay, who, in a thinly disguised work of fiction, entitled 'M  nage Moderne', had told the story of the crisis in Dangy's marriage.

Rather improbably perhaps, Noizay comes to ask Dangy for his support in his candidature for the Acad  mie Fran  aise. Dangy agrees to see him in spite of his anger and, instead of attacking Noizay's unscrupulous malice, which Noizay might reasonably have expected, he attacks his book on its literary value, and finds it wholly inadequate.

The main ground on which he bases his criticism is that, despite Noizay's cry of "Je me suis document  !" (p.261) he has distorted reality through his lack of perception and moderation. Dangy is voicing here the same criticism which had been levelled against Zola by Guiches and the other signatories of the Manifeste, that all was black and debased, unrelieved by genuine feeling:

Vos personnages sont bien les coquins les plus bas, les plus répugnants qu'on puisse imaginer. Oh! là! quelle collection! Tous dans le même sac, dans le même poêle! Une friture! (p.258)

At the same time as he presses this attack on Noizay's blunderings and, in so doing, on the inaccuracies and abuses of the doctrine of documentation, he is also analysing his own relationship with Hélène now that he can see things clearly:

Ah! moi, j'aurais fait Glagnay adorant sa femme et... la trompant quand même - cela se voit tous les jours, n'est-ce pas? - dans une sorte de griserie du succès, dans un vertige. Et non seulement la trompant mais la poussant lui-même à la faute, par... inexpérience, sans savoir, sans voir le danger (...) (p.263)

Guiches ends the play with Dangy rejecting the opinion of society. As a writer he observes and writes what he observes, but as a human being he has no concern for what is said or written about him: "Sais-tu ce que c'est?" - he tells Hélène in reference to Noizay's book, "C'est un symbole. L'opinion du monde qui vient de me faire visite. Tu as vu comme je l'ai reçue?..." (p.269)

Here we have the progressive view of the writer who has come through Naturalism into the era of psychology. The blunt instruments of Naturalism cannot convey the inner truths of the problems of society as Guiches sees them. He condemns the pursuit of documentation without psychological perception, whilst at the same time presenting a detailed and well-argued analysis of the conflict between private life and the demands of a brittle, pleasure-seeking society.

(ii) Ménage Moderne (1901)

Ménage Moderne (1901),<sup>6</sup> Guiches tells us in Le Spectacle, was written while he was waiting for his play *La Nuage* to be performed by the Comédie Française. Paul Clerget, actor and producer, offered to perform the play at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt during the period from March to the end of June, 1901. Guiches was apprehensive about the production, but on the principle that the important thing was to be performed whatever the problems, he remained silent. His fears were justified, however, when the play was a failure. In his memoirs he blames the inexperience of the young actress who played the female lead and the unsuitability of such a large theatre for "cette petite et légère pièce".<sup>7</sup> His description is apt. The play is a satire on contemporary society's lack of regard for the sanctity of marriage. It is amusing, frivolous and strikingly modern in its appeal. Its hero, Philippe Dussol, is in love with the daughter of an eccentric count who lives in the provinces and spends his time inventing things. Among his inventions are a musical burglar alarm and an automatic brake for a horse-drawn carriage. His house is full of clockwork devices. Dussol, however, has a mistress in Paris and is unwilling to give her up. He tells his friend that he can only marry a woman who will accept this fact: "qui comprendra que l'homme n'est pas fait pour vivre seul avec sa femme." (Act 1, Scene 2)

The daughter, Germaine, appears to accept this condition. Dussol, detected in Germaine's room by the count's musical burglar alarm, which plays a different tune according to the room being burgled, offers to marry her if she agrees to his keeping his mistress. The eccentric count is the one who extracts his daughter's acceptance, by omitting to explain

the condition accurately. They marry and settle in Paris. Germaine believes that Henriette de Tour is her husband's past mistress and is very friendly with her as she had promised. There is gossip about this unusual wife, and this situation gives rise to some amusing scenes between Germaine and Henriette, who interferes more than a little in the Dussol household. It is not until they quarrel openly, however, that Germaine discovers from Henriette that she is not merely Dussol's past mistress but that the relationship has continued. Shocked and angry, she declares she is leaving Dussol. She agrees to stay, however, when Joncel, Dussol's doctor and friend, tells her of his plan to marry Henriette off to her second lover, so that she will disappear from the scene. Now the tables are turned. Germaine persuades Henriette to marry d'Erignan and meantime locks her husband out of the bedroom. The discomfited husband is a recurrent figure in Guiches' work. It occurs in his novel, L'Imprévu (1890), in Snob (1897), and in Le Nuage (1901).

Germaine says she is going to Nice to join some friends on their yacht. Then she changes her mind since Joncel and others have told her that what has happened is unimportant. However, she tells her husband they are to be just friends, no more: "Unis au dehors et séparés chez nous: le ménage bien parisien, le ménage moderne." (Act 2, Scene 12) She does leave when he demands a separation. He determines to have an orgy, to have his revenge, but instead sets off in search of her. Not realising this, Germaine decides to give him his separation when he does not return. However, he then returns in a distressed condition, having been unable to find her in Nice. For the first time, he has learned what it is to suffer, having gone without food through

running out of money. She discovers a Philippe she had not known before and she forgives him.

This light-hearted plot about the fragility of marriage in modern society is interspersed with the burlesque of Count Le Thibault's activities. These comprise running for the office of Député and losing to his assistant, Dessombes, as well as the invention of non-inflammable fireworks. These anger the local people who do not appreciate his invisible firework display and throw tomatoes at him when he ventures on to the balcony of his château on election night. Guiches was criticised for his disregard of the frontiers between drama, light comedy and burlesque, but in his letter to P.B. Gueusi, director of La Nouvelle Revue, in which the text of the play appeared, he commented:

L'auteur dramatique ne présente-t-il pas au public quelques moments saisis dans la vie même de ses personnages? Et ces quelques moments ne comportent-ils pas différents états d'âme, de la gaîté, de la tristesse, du burlesque, de la douleur, de la passion, des larmes, du fou rire? Toute minute de l'existence est faite de tout cela (...)<sub>8</sub>

Nevertheless, the play made but a brief appearance on the Paris stage. Guiches hoped for his revenge with Le Nuage.



(iii) Le Nuage, (1901)

Guiches' next major play, originally to be called Les Deux Passés, but eventually appearing as Le Nuage, was first performed at the Comédie Française on 15 December, 1901, together with Paul Hervieu's L'Enigme. Although awarded the Prix Toirac by the Académie Française in 1902 for the most original play of 1901, Le Nuage was a failure. Despite its originality and despite its being only a two-act play, the long second act did not maintain the wit and vitality of the first. It was unanimously attacked by the critics and Guiches, depressed, determined never to write another play.

At first conceived as a three-act play Guiches was persuaded by Jules Claretie's comments to compress it into two. The result is a lively first act which was enthusiastically acclaimed on the first night. The second act, more serious and yet lacking dramatic interest, is unable to sustain the play's impetus. Its carefully planned ingenuity unrelieved by the wit and brilliance of the first act, becomes tiresome.

Continuing his examination of marriage in the contemporary social scene, Guiches takes as his subject the first weeks of a marriage between an apparently reformed dilettante and a young widow, neither of whom is aware of the other's past life. Guests at the wedding enliven the first scene with an account of the husband André de Vouzon, whose exploits point to a lack of serious intent: "Je trouve qu'il est républicain avec un trop beau titre de marquis, socialiste avec trop de fortune et homme de lettres avec trop de loisirs." (Le Nuage, p.5)<sup>9</sup> Defining what he means by calling Vouzon a 'dilletante', Lesault d'Ahun proclaims: "C'est l'amateur, Madame, ce qui n'est pas tout à fait l'amoureux, et encore moins l'amant."

D'Ahun, in this scene, provides both interesting informa-

tion about the young couple and much fashionable cynical wit at their expense. Henriette de Vouzon, we are told, was married at the age of sixteen to a man much older than she and to whom she was once unfaithful while he was away. On hearing that this affair was short-lived, one of the guests gives an involuntary exclamation of disappointment, at which d'Ahun comments: "Oui, n'est-ce pas, c'est navrant? Vous eussiez préféré la jolie turpitude? Eh bien, il n'y eut pas turpitude." (p.13)

Henriette was an honourable wife who knew, moreover, that her husband would kill her if he found out about her infidelity. She therefore confessed her guilt and was forgiven.

To complete the setting of the situation in the first scene we are told that the wedding sermon, to which Vouzon had not listened very attentively, had taken as its theme: "Que la franchise sans réserve était une condition indispensable à l'union parfaite entre époux." (p.18) Vouzon, however, proclaims to the guests his firm belief in the unimportance of the past to a marriage: "La franchise est comme la loi. Elle n'a pas d'effet rétroactif." (p.18)

With the situation skilfully and wittily introduced, the doubts and uncertainties well-defined, and attention clearly focussed on the problem, the play is already well poised. Guiches then at once in Scene II gives warning of the immediate dangers: the probability that the cast-off lover and mistress of the newly-weds may well make an appearance. For good measure, Henriette tells André that she cannot bear to be let down. If he should do so "un vrai nuage (...) vous cacherait à mes yeux, dans lequel vous disparaîtriez pour toujours... comme on meurt..." (p.31) By the end of the

first act André has already shattered their hopes of happiness by being discovered by Henriette with his arms round his ex-mistress.

This convincingly executed first act is followed by a second in which attempts to reconcile the estranged couple are unsuccessful. The situation changes when Henriette's former lover returns. In a scene where he tries to seduce her into resuming their former relationship, she momentarily finds herself with his arms round her. Realising that André's explanations of his own compromising position were perfectly feasible, she forgives him and explains to him how she came to change her mind. Instead of welcoming her volte-face he is horrified that she should have betrayed him, and says she has made any reconciliation impossible. However, he recognises the need for tolerance and forgiveness.

The moral as expounded by Vouzon is that both frankness and tolerance are necessary to a happy marriage: "(...) si l'amour ne peut pas se passer de franchise, il se passe encore moins d'indulgence." (p.86)

After a brisk start, therefore, the play founders in argument and inactivity. The characters are potentially interesting in their contrasting backgrounds, but both are prisoners of unexpectedly narrow philosoph<sup>o</sup>ies whereas one might have looked for tolerance and understanding in people with such experience of the world.

There is no doubt that Guiches had found a good idea but was unable to solve the problem of giving balance and variety to its development. If, as he tells us in his memoirs, he compressed the original Acts I and III into the definitive Act I, one might draw the conclusion that originally a wealth of moralising, philosophising and discussion followed

the final reconciliation at the end of the play. The original play was, in that case, certainly intolerably long and ponderous. His definitive version is, therefore, a considerable improvement. Act II, similarly pruned and enlivened, would perhaps have brought the play more success. This difficulty in exploiting a sound idea all the way through to an effective conclusion is an aspect of Guiches that we have seen elsewhere.

In a rather different way, Trop de Zèle exhibits a similar reluctance to prune back non-essential and distracting material, a tendency to follow a line of thought into an 'impasse'. As Guiches admits in his memoirs, to go wrong in a novel is a much less daunting experience for an author than to have to endure the agony of sitting through an audience's disapproval of a bad play. When Guiches next encountered difficulty in adapting his ideas to the practical theatre he called in outside help.

Guiches' heroines had shown a progressive development from the early novels. From being intelligent, independent-minded, but nevertheless unwilling victims of the provincial social system, they had become emancipated members of Parisian society, able not only to assert their independence but to turn the tables on their menfolk who were now dependent on them. The situation was, of course, not fundamentally different. Esther, in L'Ennemi, after her marriage to Jayan was a domineering influence. She exploited her husband and turned her back on her own family. The vital element in the growth of female emancipation seems therefore, to be marriage. After his second marriage Philippe Destal was

exploited by his wife, who, together with her lover, harassed him to an early grave. Emmelin in Trop de Zèle drove her husband away by her hatred and intolerance and treated her lover with equal disdain.

In the theatre, Snob had introduced a wife, who although loyal and devoted to her husband, acted independently and with determination to bring her husband to his senses, when their marriage was threatened. Le Nuage takes this feminine independence a stage further with the wife firmly in control, totally rejecting any compromise.

In both fields, theatre and novel, therefore, Guiches was concentrating on the phenomenon of the dominant wife as a feature of modern society. As a theme, and it was one which occurred in his short stories also, it was perhaps not an attractive one to either the reading or theatre-going public. Whatever the reason, Guiches made a noticeable change in the domestic situation of his next play.

(iv) Chacun sa Vie (1907)

Chacun sa Vie marked a new departure for Guiches in more ways than one. His lack of success with Le Nuage had depressed him so much that he had resolved to give up writing for the theatre. His resolution was short-lived however, for early in 1902, within a few weeks of the twelfth and final performance of Le Nuage, he had already become absorbed with the idea of gaining his revenge. What was more, he also had conceived the subject of his new play. Encouraged by Féraudy he submitted it to Jules Charetie.

Claretie pronounced the play long and slow, the work of a novelist rather than a playwright, and recommended Guiches to "roll up his sleeves" and get to work on adapting it. No doubt remembering his lack of success the last time he had undertaken the task of condensing and sharpening the edge of a play, Guiches had neither the courage to embark on it alone nor perhaps the confidence in his ability to succeed. He was ready with a solution, however. He sought the help of P.B. Gheusi, writer and man of the theatre. Reluctant at first to "collaborate" on a ready-made play, he agreed when he realised how much work was still to be done. It was not the first time that Gheusi had collaborated on a play, but on this occasion his role was quite clearly confined to the task of refashioning an existing play.

Guiches continues, with Chacun sa Vie, his series of 'pièces à thèse'. The theme, an enlightened and modern one, that marriage without children and without love was better terminated, was shocking to some, but also very relevant to the society of the new twentieth century. The argument,

as in Guiches' other 'comédies de mœurs', is clearly presented and supported. On this occasion the theme is strengthened by the added weight of a forceful and effective character. For the first time a play of Guiches had a strong male lead, an ideal vehicle for the most successful actor of the Comédie Française, Maurice de Feraudy.

François Desclos, a highly successful and wealthy engineer, who had married Henriette, a beautiful pleasure-loving woman, because he wanted to help her, now finds that he no longer loves her and she does not love him. Furthermore, Henriette is having an affair, although not yet an adulterous one, with her husband's friend Jacques d'Arvent. The main action of the play centres around François' generous gesture, Cornelian in its simple logic, offering to give Henriette a divorce so that she can marry the man she loves.

The character of Desclos develops strongly from an early scene in which he shows sympathetic concern for his secretary, Pauline, when she finds her friendship discarded by Jacques d'Arvent. Here Desclos also reveals to her, with stoic composure, his own unhappy marriage and his wife's involvement with d'Arvent. Having now recovered from an earlier discovery of her infidelity he announces to Henriette that he knows of their liaison and is willing to give her a divorce. His unexpected and generous gesture leads to some equally unexpected consequences. His forceful handling of these enables him to dominate the play as it accelerates through the last act to its conclusion.

The obstacle which stands in the way of Henriette's acceptance of her husband's offer proves to be d'Arvent's



abrupt rejection of it. Guiches had never been a supporter of the church in his work. From Céleste Prudhomat through to Philippe Destal, his novels had indicated the irrelevance of Church doctrine and religious practice to the problems of life. In the case of d'Arvent it was the religious belief held by him and his family, that divorce was unacceptable in that it indicated a denial of the sanctity of marriage, which made it impossible for him to accept Desclos' offer. The climax of the play is not a scene between Desclos and his wife or Pauline, but between Desclos and d'Arvent, in which the powerful arguments of church morality and worldly reason are debated in an atmosphere which owes its vitality and effectiveness to Guiches' energetic and well-balanced prose.

Rejecting the idea of challenging d'Arvent to a duel Desclos points out that d'Arvent has betrayed not him but Henriette. Clearly, in modern society, the woman was regarded as independent of her husband. She did not need old-fashioned duelling to protect her honour.

Quel tort m'avez-vous fait à moi? Aucun.  
Tandis qu'à elle, vous lui avez pris sa  
réputation et tout ce dont le divorce va  
la déposséder! C'est elle, l'offensée,  
je dirai même plus la victime.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless Desclos will protect his wife from d'Arvent's caprices. He will keep his wife: "Je ne veux pas qu'elle se perde, et je la sauverai." All Desclos' actions represent an honourable self-denial:

Est-ce que vous croyez que, devant cette  
humiliation voulue, je n'ai pas senti en moi  
quelque chose qui se déchirait?... Si je  
me suis dominé même au risque de sembler  
ridicule, c'est que je n'ai songé qu'à ce  
que j'aime et à ce que j'ai aimé! Et vous  
auriez dû faire de même.

From Scene VIII of Act II the character of François Desclos dominates the play. The successful engineer and businessman is translated well into the human, sympathetic but logical husband. He explains to Henriette how much he had suffered but that when he saw that she was in love with d'Arvent: "Alors j'ai fait appel à toute ma volonté et je me suis peu à peu détaché de vous."<sup>11</sup>

This Cornelian 'volonté' which is the vital factor on which the credibility of the play depends, was to be taken up as an even more important element in his next play Vouloir. By comparison, the female characters suffer from shallowness. Henriette, the spoiled frivolous wife who is amazed to find that her husband is willing to divorce her, makes her most characteristic appearance in Act II Scene III, where she is trying on the hats she has bought for her holiday with d'Arvent. Pauline is potentially more interesting as the efficient secretary who, having been rejected by d'Arvent, shows a fondness for Desclos which leads her to spy on Henriette and d'Arvent, and to report to Desclos the arrangements they have made for their holiday together. But Pauline's motives are unclear. In a scene between her and Henriette, Act II Scene V, in which the latter protests about her spying activities, she matches Henriette's sarcasm well and admits only to valuing Desclos' advice and encouragement. Yet she does not respond to Desclos' proposal of marriage, saying she is happy as things are. Pauline's is a character which remains undeveloped and uncommitted.

The witty dialogue of Guiches' earlier plays has a smaller place this time. The comedy arises partly out of Henriette's frivolousness with d'Arvent and her sarcasm with

Pauline, but mainly out of references to the mixed fortunes of the other married couples in the play. In the first scene we have but one exemplary happily married pair, contrasting with another where the husband is happier on his own, and yet another husband who is not allowed to go hunting but has to accompany his wife on painting expeditions. Desclos' clerk, Simonelli, also has trouble with his wife and cannot do his work properly. Simonelli, who has a strong Italian accent, has a wife who tries her hand at everything and has just failed her coachdriving examination.

Chacun sa Vie marks a change, however, away from the 'comédie de mœurs' to the 'comédie de caractère', a change which will find its sequel in Vouloir. With it Guiches scored his greatest success so far, a success which can be attributed to the way in which an original idea was, for once, well-developed and skilfully sustained. The two major scenes, Desclos' unexpected offer to Henriette and the final confrontation between Desclos and d'Arvent were strategically placed. The play was well-balanced and ended strongly.

Chacun sa Vie opened the new season of plays at the Comédie Française on 10 September 1907. The rehearsals had gone well. Everyone involved had enthused about the play. Madeleine Roch, the tragedian, had insisted on having a part in it. But the main burden of responsibility for the success of the play fell on Maurice de Féraudy in the part of François Desclos. The critics were almost unanimous in their praise. After its successful run at the Comédie Française, Féraudy took the play abroad and, from Buenos Aires, where its success continued, he wrote to Guiches suggesting that they should start on a new play as soon as possible. On his return to Paris Guiches was able to tell him of his idea for a new play, Vouloir.

(v) Ghyslaine, (1908)

Guiches' excursion into the field of the historical play was an entirely new departure. He tells us in Le Spectacle that he had never dreamed he would be one day knocking on the door of the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. Moreover, the setting of all his previous work, with the exception of La Pudeur de Sodome, had been strictly contemporary. Even La Pudeur de Sodome was undoubtedly inspired by Guiches' vision of contemporary society. For him to turn his back on the present-day scene, therefore, was something he had never done before. The core of interest in his novels, stories and plays had consistently lain in an analysis of human behaviour in the world around him. Observation, documentation, interpretation were the essence of his method, and every work he had produced tells us something of the motives, foibles and inadequacies of human beings living in the harsh, materialistic and generally shallow society of late nineteenth century France.

Guiches had long been critical of his contemporaries and, although a raconteur of some reputation, much of his life was spent working alone in his study, resenting even the intrusions of his family. In his early days he wrote with sympathy and feeling to his friend Francis Maratuech:

Comme vous devez être seul, mon cher ami!  
 Heureusement que vous vous accommodez de  
 la solitude qui me terrifie bien que j'aie  
 une affection modérée pour la masse qui  
 m'en détourne.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of forsaking "la masse" for a while might be expected, therefore, to have some appeal for him. To escape from the present might indeed be the only possible way for him to find a more optimistic mood. Moreover, there was

a current vogue for historical plays, thanks to the great success of Cyrano de Bergerac, in 1897. Guiches was naturally aware of what was popular and in the course of his long career he felt, reflected and was influenced by many of the literary movements and ideas of his time. Having been successful as a novelist and now as a dramatist, it was important to him to continue his run of success and to broaden the canvas of his theatre as he had done that of his novels.

The first of Guiches' historical plays was not for the Théâtre Porte Saint-Martin, but a musical drama for the Théâtre National de l'Opéra-Comique. Ghyslaine, first performed on 26 February 1908, was written in collaboration with Marcel Frager, with music by Marcel Bertrand. A slight piece written in verse and in one act only, it tells a romantic story set in Gascony in 1135, the story of Edelbert, returning to his castle in Chantac after five years of fighting in the Crusades. He is hoping for permission from the Pope to divorce his wife, Christine, who has been unfaithful to him and whom he has banished from his domain. At the same time, Ghyslaine, an orphaned daughter of noble parents brought up in Edelbert's castle and in love with him, returns from the convent she had entered when he had married Christine. In a troubadour-style song she tells her story as she approaches the castle. She has heard of Christine's death. The convent now holds no attraction for her but she is afraid she is betraying God: "Je souffre avec délice et ris avec douleur."<sup>13</sup> but the Prior of Chantac tells her she need have no fear.

However, Christine, who is still alive, arrives at Chantac, in the guise of a pilgrim, to claim her rightful place beside Edelbert. The Prior and Renaud, responsible for the castle in Edelbert's absence, refuse to accept her authority, and hearing Ghyslaine's voice, she withdraws into the chapel which bears a plaque dedicating it as her tomb.

Edelbert then arrives home from the Crusade, greeted by his servants, by Ghyslaine and by a crowd of dancers and singers. Left alone, Edelbert and Ghyslaine declare their love for each other. Ghyslaine prays before the chapel that the Pope will grant Edelbert his divorce. At that moment Christine's voice is heard from the chapel, cursing Ghyslaine. The figure of Christine then appears in a white costume, like a ghost. Ghyslaine calls Edelbert, who recognizes Christine. Ghyslaine thinks that all is lost and leaves. Christine almost succeeds in seducing Edelbert by stirring up memories of their physical passion, but Ghyslaine's voice from outside brings him back to reality. He rejects Christine and then receives word that the Pope has annulled his marriage to Christine. The latter snatches Edelbert's dagger and runs at Ghyslaine. When Edelbert seizes her arm to prevent her she turns the dagger upon herself. Her body is then placed in the tomb.

The interest of this lyrical drama is slender. After Chacun sa Vie, which was such a great success, it was undoubtedly a piece of whimsical extravagance.

(vi) Lauzun (1909)

It is perhaps not surprising that Guiches, like Edmond Rostand, should look to Gascony for a source of inspiration. Although not himself a Gascon, he was a close neighbour. Quercy, Perigord, Gascony, were all his part of France and he was to write, with enthusiasm, the story of more than one of their famous sons.<sup>14</sup> Guiches was clear about the importance of one's native soil:

Le sol natal n'est pas un vain mot. En lui sont les produits spéciaux dont l'absorption contribue chez le "natif" à la formation, non seulement de l'être physique, mais de l'être moral. Ils sont, pour lui, d'un usage bien-faisant, nécessaire et même personnel. Le vin tonifie l'homme de son terroir qui sait, d'instinct ce qu'il doit en prendre et ce qu'il doit en laisser, tandis qu'il enivre abominablement l'étranger qui en prend beaucoup plus qu'il n'en laisse.<sup>15</sup>

The subject of Lauzun,<sup>16</sup> Guiches tells us in Le Spectacle, was suggested to him by François de Nion, who at the same time proposed that they should collaborate to write it. When the play was accepted by the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, the leading part was to be played by Coquelin Aîné, whose greatest success had been as Cyrano de Bergerac at the same theatre in 1897. The first setback came when Coquelin died of a heart attack in January, 1909. Then disagreement between his replacement, Abel Tarride, and the director, Henri Hertz, threatened the play's future. It opened on 16 April 1909. Although it had a favourable reception, the wrangling which accompanied the play's rehearsals and performance did not help its prospects. Moreover, the producer had omitted to tell Guiches that it could only have thirty performances as the theatre was already booked for another play after that.



Guiches was once again bitterly disappointed.

Henri Austruy's review of the play in La Nouvelle Revue, 1 May 1909, speaks of it as following worthily in the tradition of plays on Gascony like Cyrano de Bergerac. The play is a lively and witty account of an episode in the galant life of Lauzun, Marshal of France who lived from 1632 to 1723. Born in Gascony, he had a flamboyant career and married La Grande Mademoiselle, a German cousin of Louis XIV. The episode related is the occasion of Lauzun's request to the king for permission to marry La Grande Mademoiselle, the king's agreement, followed by his refusal, then Lauzun's defiance, disgrace and final rehabilitation. The character of Lauzun, as portrayed by Guiches and de Nion, is an attractive one, presenting the irrepressible self-assured and resourceful courtier, caught up in the endeavours of Madame de Montespan to maintain her influence with the king and to ensure an inheritance for her son. It is Lauzun whose audacity is at the centre of the dramatic action. The king has given his permission for the marriage, but when Madame de Montespan threatens to go into a convent if it takes place, he withdraws it. Lauzun, angry at the king's broken promise, draws his sword in the king's presence and breaks it, declining to serve a king who breaks his word. For this he is arrested and held at the Château de Pignerol. There, he successfully defies the efforts of his aggressive jailor to restrain him. He comes and goes, baffling his captors, to purchase flowers and collect his correspondence, full of spirit and optimism. His optimism is rewarded by a visit from Mademoiselle.

Mademoiselle, an unsuspecting victim of Madame de Montespan's

cunning, has all but agreed to the latter's offer to allow Lauzun to marry Mademoiselle if she cedes all her wealth to the Duc de Maine, Madame de Montespan's eldest son by the king. Lauzun, however, is more astute. Madame de Montespan, who also arrives at Pignerol, with the king's order freeing Lauzun, subject to this condition, quickly finds herself outmanoeuvred by him. Lauzun takes possession of the order, locks both Madame de Montespan and the prison governor in his cell and escapes with Mademoiselle. Nothing is heard of them for more than a month, when they finally arrive in Paris. Lauzun is able to prove to the king that Madame de Montespan herself had added the condition to the order.

Madame de Maintenon's influence at court is already noticeable. Courtiers who were enjoying an eventful court life at the beginning of the play are now complaining of boredom. By contrast with the first performance of Molière's Tartuffe, heard in the background in Act One, the sounds are now those of violins playing religious music. Ministers of the church and their apparatus are much in evidence. One of the courtiers remarks: "Il n'y a que des prie-Dieu." Madame de Montespan is now in disgrace, but the king's intended act of gratitude to Lauzun is thwarted when the latter discloses that he and Mademoiselle have married in secret in the king's absence. The king's amused rather than angry reaction allows the play to end on a note of triumph for the enterprising Lauzun.

The picture of court life presented by Guiches and his collaborator bears a close resemblance to the scenes of high society, for example in Snob (1897). The same malevolently witty remarks about friends, both absent and present, are a

feature of both. Here, Dangeau, complaining that many of them have been unable to obtain seats for the first performance of Tartuffe, remarks, in the presence of others who include the Abbé de Visconti and Monsieur de Montespan:

"(...) c'est vraiment une honte que lorsqu'on joue Tartuffe où, paraît-il, on raille les dévots, il n'y ait pas une place pour l'abbé de Visconti, et que lorsqu'on nous montre un mari dont la femme est admirée, et même distinguée, on laisse Montespan se morfondre à la porte." (Act I, Scene 1)

Furthermore, the social background of the plot is given some importance. In seeking the support of his peers, Lauzun draws their attention to the fact that if he succeeds in his ambition to marry Mademoiselle, it will be a triumph for the "petite noblesse" and will give them hope for the future.

Lauzun also refers to the role of the nobility at Versailles: "Pourquoi vient-elle ici? Elle est si bien aux champs. Elle y vit mal, c'est vrai. Elle y est pauvre, mais la main à la charrue, elle est autrement belle que grattant du peigne à toutes les portes et mendiant des emplois." (Act I, Scene 6)

The atmosphere of the seventeenth century is evoked with wit and humour. The character of Lauzun in particular brings to the play an attractive audacity not very different from that of Cyrano de Bergerac, whose success Guiches no doubt sought to emulate. On the other hand, the character of Louis XIV differs from the traditional one of the all-powerful despot, flattered by all and disobeyed at one's peril. Here he seems much too genial and too easily manipulated. The atmosphere of intrigue and desperation which surrounded the battle for the king's favour is, however, effectively conveyed

by Guiches and de Nion. Mademoiselle is one of Guiches' rather rare unworldly heroines. There seems not a trace of guile or mistrust in her words or deeds, only a genuine affection for Lauzun and singleness of purpose in her desire to marry him. Madame de Mairtenon's role is to mark the decline of Madame de Montespan's fortunes and to support Lauzun against her rival. The play is entertaining and, well constructed. Had conditions been more favourable, with Coquelin aîné in the title role, it might well have enjoyed a greater success.

(vii) Vouloir (1913)

Guiches did not seek the help of a collaborator for his next play, Vouloir, first performed at the Comédie Française on 19 May 1913, based, in a remote way, on his novel Philippe Destal. Chacun sa Vie had marked the beginning of a bond of friendship between Guiches and Maurice de Féraudy. Vouloir was a second vehicle for their successful partnership.

As the title suggests, the dominating theme of the new play is will-power, the exercise of the will to control a passionate desire and to bring about the opposite of what one really desires. This is not simply a Cornelian exercise of will, but the dramatisation of a deliberate conscious effort to discipline emotions and to order events by a skilful manipulation of the other characters. Guiches had shown in his novel L'Imprévu how the individual was at the mercy of the unforeseen, despite current ideas of the dangerous power of the human mind over others. In Vouloir the will is supreme, a 'tour de force' by the principal character, Dr. Richard Lemas, who, suppressing his own passion for Madame Laurence Dalbois, engineers her marriage to his friend Philippe Destal, who is in desperate need of help.

The original powerful theme of the novel Philippe Destal is completely ignored in this play. Only the name and neurotic nature of the leading character are retained, together with the setting in the Château de Morillon, originally based on the mediaeval Château de Roussillon. The intense ascetic medieval atmosphere of the original novel now gives way, however, to the modern world of high society and self-indulgence. Philippe Destal is now something of a pawn, always unpredictable

and frequently rebellious, but nonetheless a pawn in the hands of the other characters who pursue their various ambitions in a web of intrigue, in which the central and dominant figure is Dr. Richard Lemas.

As a famous neurologist, he is called in to help his brother-in-law, Destal, who has completely lost his zest for living after the death of his wife, Lemas' sister. Lemas' visit coincides with that of a Dr. Didiaix whose nearby clinic for the neurotically disturbed is at that moment being visited in turn by a Madame Laurence Dalbois. Lemas has already confessed to Destal's personal physician an incident in his own life when he attended a lady with whom he fell in love, but who did not return his love. By now he has conquered his unrequited love, but the lady has reappeared. Lemas does not explain that the lady in question is Laurence. Turning to Destal's problem, Lemas sees at once that Laurence is the woman Philippe needs. His first major exercise in will-power enables him to work to bring this about. Act I, which has sixteen scenes, culminates in the marriage.

Act II sees Philippe Destal apparently restored to normality, campaigning with his new wife for a seat in the *Chambre des Députés*, having resumed the political life he had previously abandoned. The situation is soon seen to be very unstable, however, when Dr. Didiaix, who had hoped himself to marry Laurence and thereby save his clinic from impending ruin with her wealth, returns to disturb the household. He accuses Lemas of excluding him from the house because he is still in love with Laurence and is afraid that Didiaix will take her from him. The strong-willed Lemas for once loses

control and challenges Didiaix to a duel. That Lemas should fight a duel allegedly on Laurence's behalf brings out into the open Destal's already strong jealousy. To Laurence, who defends Lemas, Destal replies with bitter words and finally, although he knows she will never forgive him for this, he compares her "hypocrisy" with the loyal devotion of his first wife - "dont vous ne serez jamais pour moi que la grimace." (Vouloir, p.28)<sup>17</sup>

Laurence tells Lemas that these were the only words which could bring to an end her love for Destal. Circumstances force Lemas to confess his former love for her, a confession which she receives with both surprise, and an invitation to go away with her now. This revival of hope for his passion does not make him forget Destal, however, and in an ingenious final Act, Lemas finds that Destal takes his intention to leave with Laurence as an artificial device to bring Destal to his senses. Lemas cannot convince him otherwise, particularly as Destal is now anxious to be reconciled with Laurence. Unable to destroy a marriage that he himself had created, and realising that the rift between Philippe Destal and Laurence was temporary, Lemas draws on his resources of will once more, and, using his manipulative skill, restores Laurence's devotion to Philippe by arousing her jealousy, suggesting that Philippe, far from being upset, was already planning to marry his cousin.

Lemas' definition of his role is given to Destal's family doctor: "Vouloir, Bagel, c'est vouloir ce que l'on ne veut pas!" But the effort of will and the professional skill of the neurologist do not lessen the underlying sense of conflict and involvement within himself. In the end when Philippe Destal comments admiringly: "Il n'a eu qu'à vouloir!" Lemas



asks Bagel to take him to the station, adding: "Je n'en peux plus!" (p.32)

Laurence, reminiscent of Guiches' other heroines, is a strong and independent-minded personality, a suitable balance both for Destal's neurosis and Lemas's tactical skill. Her emotional attachment to Destal is less convincing than her ambitious desire for him to be a successful politician, her jealousy of his first wife and her taste for a full social life. She belongs to the balanced extrovert world of Dr. Lemas as opposed to those who have fallen victim to the pressures of modern society.

The latter are well-represented. Not only Philippe Destal, but the inmates of Dr. Didiaix's clinic also play an active part in the play. Dr. Bagel allowed them the run of the château as he thought they might amuse Destal. But their histrionic behaviour has a triple function in the play. It provides comedy in that their 'ailments' are ridiculous. Carratier, deputy for the Drôme explains to Lemas: "(...) J'ai eu la douleur d'échouer à la députation" (p.62) Madame Léonard, a singer, tells him: "ma voix m'a manqué tout à coup en plein concert."

These are the causes of their strange behaviour which has earned them the title of "les curiosités du pays". Destal's cousin Renée tells us: "Ils n'ont pas la souffrance discrète! Ils se droguent, ils se piquent, ils rient, ils pleurent, ils dansent! Ils mènent une mélancolie d'enfer!" (p.51)

They have also their function in the plot. They help to arouse Destal's jealousy after his marriage by their strong allegiance to Lemas and by referring, in a song being

rehearsed for a revue to be put on by the invalids, to Laurence as "la veuve joyeuse". This reference makes Philippe Destal jealous and angry and prepares his quarrel with Lemas and Laurence.

Finally the invalids enable Guiches to indicate a malaise of contemporary society. It is perhaps not without significance that the theme of his play should be centred around doctors, four of whom play a part. Doctors and society appear not to have changed a great deal since Molière's day. Dr. Bagel is preparing to retire and allow his son Dr. Gardes to take over from him. He says people are developing a liking for operations and introduces his son as a clever young man "qui se fera un plaisir de leur ouvrir la gorge, de leur couper un bras ou une jambe, bref qui a tout ce qu'il faut pour leur plaire." (p.32)

Our concern in this play is with mental illness, however, Dr. Didiaix is making money out of the wave of psychological depression which is a by-product of modern society. Dr. Lemas comes along, recognizes among the 'invalids' people he had previously met in Paris society and berates them for giving way to their problems. He tells them of the epidemics of plague and cholera he has seen and ridicules their trivial troubles:

Vous êtes à blâmer, car cette neurasthénie, qui n'était d'abord qu'une mode, est devenue la justification de toutes les fautes, de tous les crimes. Si bien qu'à l'heure actuelle, la neurasthénie n'est même plus une maladie, c'est une excuse, l'excuse nationale. (p.70)

Clearly Guiches disapproved of the way society was moving in 1913. The pre-1914 malaise which he indicates here was a weak-willed submission to the problems arising from the bustle of the twentieth century.

Richard Lemas, trying to persuade Laurence to marry Destal, tells her:

Vous avez peur du bonheur, car vous êtes ainsi, maintenant, vous autres! Vous avez peur de tout, de l'amour, du mariage, peur des enfants eux-mêmes! On n'aime plus! on ne se marie plus!" (p.14)

Abel Hermant, reviewing the play in Le Journal pointed to the topicality of will-power at that time:

La volonté paraît si belle que nous l'admirons sous toutes ses formes (...)  
M. Gustave Guiches, rien qu'en intitulant sa pièce Vouloir, a déjà su toucher le public au bon endroit.<sup>18</sup>

Guiches had, for a long time, been critical of the superficial pleasure-seeking image of Parisian society. He had always advocated a responsible attitude to marriage, the application of reason and sincerity to human relations. In the twentieth century, however, he took a more optimistic view than he had earlier. In the novel of 1892 Philippe Destal had seen self-exile as the only way to salvation in a world of superficial values. Twenty-one years later Guiches' hero, Richard Lemas, is master of the situation and, although he himself suffers personally from his activities, the predominant note is one of optimism, brought about by effective application of the will to overcome adversity.

Another evergreen in Guiches' repertoire, his interest in the magic art of public speaking, is aired once again in Vouloir. Laurence, on meeting Philippe Destal for the first time, recalls how she had heard him speak in the Chambre des Députés and how exciting it was. Her description of the occasion revives Destal's interest in the power of

the spoken word:

Tenez, pendant que vous me parliez, il me semblait que ma parole endormie s'agitait en moi, se réveillait de ses quatre ans de silence! Ah! parler, parler, quand c'est pour faire triompher une idée, quand c'est pour le bien ou pour la beauté, persuader, convaincre, émouvoir, ah! quelle jouissance, cela! Ah! oui, je l'ai aimé, mon art!<sup>19</sup>

(viii) Language and Style

Undoubtedly part of the attraction of the theatre for Guiches was the opportunity to hear the words he wrote. He was, throughout his life, a fascinating craftsman in language. For a writer like Flaubert who painstakingly constructed great edifices of the written word the novel was an adequate medium. Guiches had something of Balzac's powerful emotional feeling for words which led him to think beyond the confines of the novel and the short story. The politician's role in the exploitation of words, touched upon in this quotation from Vouloir, was fully dealt with by Guiches after the war in his novels Le Tremplin (1919), and its sequel La Tueuse (1924). His reputation as a 'raconteur' clearly shows his skill and fascination as a talker. The theatre was, in a sense, Guiches' parliament or courtroom. Not that he sought to sway the opinions of his listeners or to indoctrinate them with his ideas. Rather was it an opportunity for him to exploit the power of language in a different medium.

Of Vouloir Henri Austruy wrote in La Nouvelle Revue:

C'est un langage naturel que parlent les personnages. Si ceux-ci sont des lettrés et des virtuoses du verbe, ce n'est pas à nous de nous en plaindre.

Edmond Sée wrote of Guiches in Gil-Blas with reference to the same play:

Sa présence se manifeste heureusement et sans cesse par une boutade, un trait d'observation, un mot exquis... ou cette simple phrase qui vous berce et vous caresse encore l'oreille et que seul un écrivain de classe pouvait avoir ainsi rythmée.

We have already seen in these pages evidence of Guiches'

effective language in Vouloir. Chacun sa Vie provides many more examples of this. The combination of a well-balanced sentence structure with an effective directness makes for good theatre. Desclos, pleading the case for a rational attitude to love, tells his listeners:

Vous plaiguez un homme à qui l'on vole sa fortune et vous riez de lui si on lui vole sa femme! Vous blamez l'homme qui affiche une maîtresse, parce qu'il est hors du mariage et vous la rejetez s'il épouse cette maîtresse! Que diable voulez-vous? Je suis un homme de chiffres, moi. J'adore le bon sens et la logique. Je vous parais un sauvage, c'est possible; mais, s'il n'y avait pas de dames, je vous dirais bien de quoi vous avez l'air. (Chacun sa Vie, p.5)

The ternary phrase, which occurs regularly in Guiches' novels, not surprisingly turns up in his theatre too. Protesting to her lover that she is not always thinking about her husband, Henriette Desclos tells him:

Qu'est-ce que j'ai de commun avec cet homme qui s'ennuie partout où je me plais, qui n'a dans la tête que ses palmiers et ses chemins de fer, et que j'ai épousé je ne sais plus pourquoi ni comment? (p.10)

The simple line is handled with equal skill. François Desclos puts Pauline wise about conscience: "Ah! ma pauvre petite amie! la conscience!... Quand on lui parle gentiment, elle vous permet tout."

Not unexpectedly, Guiches' more striking lines are usually spoken by the principal characters, seldom by the minor characters. He had the good fortune to have Feraudy in the lead parts of his two most important plays Chacun sa Vie and Vouloir, both of which, as character plays, were ideally suited to his acting. Nevertheless, minor characters, such as Lesault d'Ahun in Le Nuage, frequently have the wittiest lines, couched in a sharp, trenchant style.

Guiches, as in his novels, brings authenticity and humour to his plays, by bringing local colour into the language and accents of his characters. Simonelli, in Chacun sa Vie, is a source of comedy:

Qué boulez-vous? Ze né peux pas m'y faire!  
 ...Zé me disais qu'oune fois réçoue cocère  
 elle serait affreuse sous ce costume et qué  
 zé m'en dégoûterais! Z'ai tous les zours  
 pour dix francs de voitoure et zé, né peux  
 pas m'empêcé de loui écrire. (p.15)

Alongside the varied and striking aspects of Guiches' style we must acknowledge also the dialectic side of his writing. Particularly in his earlier plays, Guiches' characters frequently hold and express, sometimes at length, moral views which are important to the plots and themes of the plays. Thus Vouzon, in Le Nuage, gives his views on the question of honesty between man and wife: "La franchise est comme la loi. Elle n'a pas d'effet rétroactif." (Le Nuage, p.18) "La femme a droit au silence sur son passé, comme l'homme, ni plus ni moins." (p.19)

Similarly, Henriette, recognising the mistake she had made in accusing her husband of having a mistress, analyses her conclusions:

Je ne m'excuse pas. Vos torts étaient impardonnables, les miens ne le sont pas. Et pourtant il faut que nous le reconnaissons, si nous nous étions tout dit, nous aurions été protégés contre toute surprise. Mais on ne se punit pas d'une erreur comme d'un crime. Si nous avons manqué de franchise, c'était pour nous épargner une souffrance. C'est donc que nous nous aimons toujours et que rien ne peut nous séparer. (p.84)

No doubt a contributory factor to the failure of Le Nuage was the inescapable impression that the characters "raisonnent trop". They are, admittedly, unlike Corneille's heroes and



heroines, strongly swayed by emotions, but considerable time and space is given to the propounding of theories and analyses of the situation. Interestingly, in the midst of this "courtroom apologia" in which "counsel" argue for and against evidence and theory, Guiches, just as he had frequently committed impassioned speech to paper in his novels, here cites the written word. Thus Vouzon's beliefs in the confidentiality of the past are reinforced by a letter from Henriette's former lover in which he writes: "La femme doit le silence à elle-même, à celui qu'elle aime et à celui qu'elle aime". (p.27)

This written evidence in the case of honesty versus secrecy, which simultaneously introduces the character who is to be essential to the dénouement, evokes even more clearly the analogy of the courtroom. But, curiously, Vouzon also spells out his views to be written down, for Madame de Puy-moreau to include in her feminist revue:

Eh bien... Parce qu'il serait cruel ou dangereux d'attrister ou d'anéantir dans la plupart des cas, des illusions nécessaires - point et virgule: ensuite parce que ce passé n'appartient ni à l'un à l'autre, qu'il est en quelque sorte une propriété sous séquestre, et que les amants, sont de tous les fonctionnaires, les moins dispensés du secret professionnel. (p.19)

It could be said of Guiches, particularly in the case of Le Nuage, that he was better at expounding his characters' ideas than he was in bringing them to life through dramatic action. We have seen how his first drafts of his plays were more than once described as novels, rather than plays, by Jules Claretie. Le Nuage is overburdened with a plethora of analysis and interpretation. The character of Henriette, like the others, is based on a fixed psychological premise

which is projected before she has cause for any complaint:

(...) Je ne vous pardonnerai pas le plus léger démenti (...). Oui. Ce serait, entre nous... le nuage. Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est que mon nuage? C'est un phénomène qui m'est particulier. Je l'ai déjà éprouvé en amitié. Je ne supporte pas la déception. Si elle me venait de vous, eh bien, ce serait entre nous le nuage, un vrai nuage qui brouillerait, à l'instant même ma vision, qui vous cacherait à mes yeux, dans lequel vous disparaîtriez pour toujours... comme on meurt... (pp.30-31)

Guiches becomes engrossed in his problem, sometimes to the exclusion of dramatic interest. Success comes when he learns to balance "la pièce à idées" with the needs of the theatre, as he does in Chacun sa Vie. Nevertheless, the cogent analysis and expression of ideas continued to be a characteristic feature of Guiches' style.

NOTES

1. "On naît auteur dramatique, on se fait romancier."  
Le Spectacle, p.9.
2. André Antoine, 1858-1943, was born in Limoges. The story of the Théâtre Libre was told by Antoine himself in Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre Libre, Revue Hebdomadaire, Paris, 1921, and, among others, by Guiches in Le Spectacle, pp.28-44, and by Edmond Sée in Le Théâtre français contemporain, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1941, chapter II.
3. Le Spectacle, p.27. The similarity, in fact, is not very marked. Guiches was undoubtedly thinking of Esther and Alfred, but the young man who takes Esther away from Alfred is not so young and, apart from his riding, not notably athletic. See Appendix A (xi) for a letter to Guiches from the Théâtre Libre on the subject of Les Quarts d'Heure. Guiches made several attempts to have his play Consciences, based on the story of L'Ennemi, performed, but without success. See Appendix A (vi) for a letter from Guiches to Jules Claretie on the subject.
4. See Appendix A (x) for a letter from Sacha Guitry to Guiches.
5. Snob, P. Ollendorff, Paris, 1895. See Appendix C (xivi) for an extract from Guiches' notebooks in which he notes amendments to be made to the play, probably as a result of discussions with Lucien Guitry.
6. First performed at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt on 29 March 1901, and published in La Nouvelle Revue, April-June 1901. Its story was retold in the novel Bonne Fortune, 1905.
7. Le Spectacle, p.180.
8. La Nouvelle Revue, 15 April 1901, p.482.
9. Le Nuage, Comédie en Deux Actes, Paris, Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle, Eugène Fasquelle ed. 1902, Act I, Scene I, p.5.
10. Chacun sa Vie, published in L'Illustration Théâtrale, Paris, 1907, Act 3, Scene 4, p.30.
11. Chacun sa Vie, p.21.
12. Lettres à Francis Maratuech, La Nouvelle Revue, 4<sup>o</sup> Série, Vol. 144, p.43.
13. Ghyslaine. Drame lyrique en un Acte. Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle. Eugène Fasquelle, Editeur, Paris, 1908, p.12.

14. Apart from Lauzun, Guiches was to write La Vie Amoureuse de Murat (1930), a biography of Murat, born in La Bastide-Murat, Lot, Le Tremplin (1919), and La Tueuse (1921), both of which were based on the life of Léon Gambetta, born in Cahors.
15. Le Pays de France, Volume III, No.XX, Périgord, Quercy, Hachette, 1924. Introduction by Gustave Guiches.
16. This play was never published as a book. It appeared in full, however, in Comœdia, 21 July 1913.
17. La Petite Illustration, Paris, 1913.
18. Quoted in La Petite Illustration, Paris, 1913, p.28.
19. Ibid, p.13.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

Probably at no time before or since has the cauldron of the literary world been as active and seething as it was at the time of the Goncourts. In the battle for recognition, as Guiches well knew, he was competing to be heard in a packed arena.

"Il faudra jouer des coudes." was his phrase in Au Banquet de la Vie.<sup>1</sup> The new era of public education, but more particularly the new cult of the novel which resulted from the success of Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal, had multiplied the ranks of the novelists to such a degree that success and eternal glory was to be denied many whose writing deserved public recognition.

René Dumesnil, writing in 1960, remarked on the silence which had settled round the name of Guiches and shared André Billy's surprise that despite "Ses romans pourtant pleins de mérite...le succès de Céleste Prud'homat fut sans lendemain."<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt of the high regard of eminent critics for the work of Gustave Guiches. Dumesnil shared this regard:

...Guiches, s'il fut vraiment poète, fut pour le Quercy, lorsqu'il en parla, ce que Maupassant fut pour le pays de Caux, et ce naturaliste est pareillement poète."<sup>3</sup>

His novels were greeted with enthusiastic praise by notable writers and critics such as Bloy, Sée, Huysmans, Margueritte, Coppée, Sarcey, Billy, Goncourt, Charpentier, Rachilde, Donnay, Rosny, and many others, whose encouraging remarks are available to us either reproduced in the pages of Guiches' memoirs or in the pages of Mercure de France and other journals.

In 1929 he was made an Officier of the Légion d'Honneur on which occasion Maurice Donnay again referred to the glorious success of Céleste Prudhomat which delighted Donnay:

par ton accent inimitable d'enfant du Lot,  
avec quelque chose de fluide et de plus  
septentrional, un point d'ail, dirai-je,  
par la courbe de tes gestes, élégants comme  
les boucles de rivières flexibles de ta  
région...<sup>4</sup>

Yet six years later Guiches died in poverty and oblivion. Jean Ajalbert wrote in Mémoires à Rebours about the circumstances of Guiches' death:

Encore fus-je frappé quand Gustave Guiches mourut il y a quelques semaines, de la sécheresse cruelle de sa nécrologie. Ni fleurs ni couronnes. Il était donc tellement oublié. Après de si brillants débuts, des succès répétés dans le roman et au théâtre, une carrière si nombreuse (...) l'auteur de Céleste Prudhomat à 75 ans n'avait pas de quoi vivre - de quoi mourir.<sup>5</sup>

Rarely perhaps has a writer inspired such sympathetic and perplexed surprise at his failure to win a lasting place in the public esteem and the annals of literature. It is pertinent to ask, some forty years after the year of his death, what were the reasons for this failure. Ajalbert, while not persevering in the search for an answer to the same question, puts forward some tentative suggestions:

Mais laissons le cas de ce cadet de Quercy, qui devait se brûler les ailes aux flammes traîtresses de Paris, et ne cherchons pas les raisons, santé fragile, nonchalance de caractère, insouciance de ses intérêts matériels, sans prévoyance de l'avenir, qui l'empêchèrent d'assurer la paix de ses vieux jours.

Guiches was troubled by his health already in 1910 and finally succumbed, in 1935, to cancer of the prostate gland. For 25 years he was in failing health and at the same time was finding it difficult to adapt his work to the changing

social and literary climate. The charge of "nonchalance de caractère" is not borne out by his earlier reminiscences in his Souvenirs Littéraires in which he shows clear determination to succeed in the contemporary literary fray, but later on, after disappointments in the theatre with Nuage (1901), Vouloir (1913) and with his post war novels, he found it impossible to fight his way back into public favour and failed to meet the challenge of the post-war age.

Emile Laporte, writing in the Journal du Lot on 7 August 1935, seems to agree on Guiches' lack of aggressive ambition:

Si ce charmant écrivain n'a pas eu son plein de gloire, si, dans l'invasion des temps nouveaux par des affairistes brutaux, il n'avait pas gardé la grande renommée à laquelle il avait droit, ce n'est pas qu'il fut inférieur par le talent à tant d'autres dont les œuvres se lisent peu mais dont le nom reste prestigieux. c'est surtout qu'il était complètement dénué de cet esprit d'intrigue et de cet art publicitaire par lequel certains savent si bien suppléer à leur absence de talent.

The charge of improvidence would be difficult to prove. Guiches certainly entertained lavishly in his heyday and used to hire the Château de la Grezette in which to receive his friends from Paris while visiting his native Quercy. On the other hand he had some big successes in the theatre with Snob and Chacun sa Vie and felt an obligation to the actors who had been instrumental in his success. The disastrous effect of the war on money values contributed to a reduction in Guiches' circumstances just as it did for many others who might otherwise have spent their retirement in comfort.

Leaving aside the material circumstances of Guiches' death, however, the question of his contribution to French Literature and his rightful place in the literary archives still remains to be answered.



We have already seen that Guiches' close association with the writing fraternity led to his conformity to many of the fashionable style patterns. It is, however, significant that those with whom he had his closest friendships, Villiers and ~~Hysmans~~<sup>4</sup>, contributed nothing or very little to his social or personal vision. Whereas they analysed and explored the more extreme facets of human behaviour, Guiches' vision was ever tied to the struggles of the ordinary middle-class individual against an unsympathetic nature or an unsympathetic society, where not sinister perversions but the simple pre-occupations of society with greed and egotism are at the root of all conflict.

Martin Turnell remarks that "The nineteenth century novelist was not interested in the individual, he was interested in mass movements."<sup>6</sup>

Guiches was one of the exceptions to this generalisation. Céleste Prudhomat, Claire de Gizols, Philippe Destal point to his growing interest in the conflict between the sensitive individual and the materialist society in which he lives. He is strongly critical of society, its standards, its values, the conduct and motives of mothers marrying off their daughters and the marital behaviour of the average citizen who puts personal ambition above fidelity and morality. He was always, however, equally interested in the individual's character and aspirations, (unlike Flaubert whose cynicism was almost universally applied) and increasingly it was the individual's prospects of finding happiness which occupied Guiches' attention. His analysis of the unworldly mind of Philippe Destal was the logical consequence of his vision of man in society. It was an ultimate indication of the only true happiness which he saw as independent of the material needs of the body.

Guiches' psychology was often, as Turnell suggests of nineteenth century psychology in general "grossly simplified." Leon Dussol's attempts to mould Adeline to his pattern and his rather naive disconcertment when the tables are turned are in the tradition of the rigid determinist psychology of Taine and Bourget and bear no resemblance to, say, the sensitive psycho-analysis of Proust. In the case of Philippe Destal, however, the analysis is more complex and intriguing. Although apparently based on the supposition that a hypersensitive mind must go hand-in-hand with a physical frailty and nervous unbalance, the hereditary and mystical elements in Destal's personality contribute a fascinating study of mental derangement and self-denial. Philippe Destal is not a decadent hero, although he bears many of the hallmarks of such a man. He is a solitary figure, disillusioned with the world and suffering intolerably, both mentally and physically, from life. But he does not seek, as does des Esseintes, to revenge himself by a morbid obsession with the more extreme sensual aspects of the material world. No doubt there is some indication here of Huysmans' interest in the occult rubbing off onto Guiches, but Guiches makes use of it for his own purposes, to point not to an escape from reality into satanism, but to an exclusive concentration on the one element of reality in which his hero finds unspoiled happiness, the memory of his first wife. For this the ascetic self-discipline which is inherent in his personality is essential.

As a study in the obstinate but frustrated aspirations of the ordinary individual, however, Guiches never repeated the incisive authenticity of Céleste Prud'homme. Successive critics<sup>4</sup> referred to him as the novelist of Quercy. Perhaps, as Ajalbert suggested, he burned his wings in the treacherous

flames of Paris. Certainly the influence of the capital and the society of writers and artists led him away from his native province to a concentration on the superficial society of Paris and the large town. Had he devoted his efforts to the further exploitation of provincial life he might have won for himself lasting acclaim in a field where his rivals were few. In Paris, however, the competition was immense and the influences detrimental to his style and unproductive in vital inspiration. His successes in the novel, and particularly in the theatre, were in tune with the public appetite for gazing upon a reflection of its own brittle and pleasure-seeking face. Unfortunately, this was not enough to secure lasting success. His work lacked the vital originality or sensationalising to lift it out of the morass of other writing. To be able to tell a good story well, a gift which makes his novels highly readable even in the 1970's, was not quite enough. Only his novels about his native Quercy have the authenticity, originality and persuasive quality which might have earned him enduring fame.

One of the interesting features of Guiches' work is the part played by the women characters. Although victims, on the whole, of social and moral injustice they represented the new class of women, prepared by education to play a responsible part in modern society. Céleste Prudhomat takes over her new job from a schoolmaster. Claire de Gizols, too, is a public servant, in the service of the post office. Alongside these pioneers of female emancipation we also find represented the society women, intellectual women frequently, like Adeline and Mary in L'Imprévu, and Laure in Philippe Destal, but whose activities form part of the artificial web of Parisian society. Only when Guiches is writing of the people of his native Quercy do we find the unsophisticated and functional

role of the modern woman. When he returns to the subject of Quercy in Les Deux Soldats (1917), after a long absence, we are at once refreshed by his portrait of the young wife Zélia working the farm while her husband is away at the war. Not since 1892 in Un Cœur Discret had his portrait of woman rung so fundamentally true. The subject of the scheming mistress, the wronged wife and the broken marriage had filled the pages of his novels and short stories, and had occupied the stage in his plays for 25 years. Although characterized by a passionate and patriotic love of his native land, and to this extent a largely romanticized account of Quercy in war-time, the authenticity of his portrait still comes through.

Emile Laporte remarks on Guiches' worthy contribution in a golden age of journalism:<sup>7</sup>

Nous tenons à ne pas oublier de noter que notre compatriote fut aussi un journaliste de tout premier rang, qu'il écrivait de ravissantes, et parfois, mordantes chroniques au Figaro, au Gil Blas, à l'Echo de Paris en ce temps où celui-ci était un beau journal littéraire et alors que, de Laurent Tailhade jusqu'à Henri Bauer, la presse parisienne comptait un groupe de chroniqueurs dont l'éclat n'a jamais été égalé.

Others remember him as a raconteur of the first order. His personality and his wit, his humour and interest in his fellow men made him an entertaining host and a warm and sympathetic companion. Maurice Donnay suggests that he was so popular as a host and companion that many exploited this and took up too much of his time.<sup>4</sup> His friendship for some of the great men of literature testifies to the truth of this reputation and his memoirs indicate quite clearly both his personal qualities and his extensive knowledge and experience of the literary world between 1887 and 1914.

General Keller remarks on the ephemeral nature of the "concert d'éloges sincères"<sup>8</sup> which were voiced on the occasion of Guiches' death and suggests that some of these colleagues must have felt remorse at the way Guiches had been neglected by them and the public.

After a re-examination of Guiches' life and works more than forty years after his death, we can scarcely avoid echoing General Keller's comments made in 1957. Quoting Lucien Descaves' words in 1935: "Ayant assisté aux derniers moments de son maître Villiers de l'Isle Adam, il devait se consoler en pensant qu'un littérateur qui meurt pauvre peut tout de même laisser une fortune: son nom."<sup>9</sup> General Keller goes on to say how impossible it is to obtain Guiches' work in his native Quercy. His name, which Descaves confidently proclaimed was his legacy for posterity, has died even for the people of Albas and Cahors. The statue to his memory<sup>10</sup> which was ceremonially unveiled in 1936, is all that remains accessible to the public even if they are well-enough informed to show an interest. His name has a place in the history of Naturalism, but most general histories of French literature make no mention of him.<sup>11</sup> This creative writer who in his lifetime was at the heart of the literary world and whose work reflects the movements of his age and the deeper aspirations of humanity has faded from the scene.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Au Banquet de la Vie, p.238.
2. André Billy. La Littérature Française Contemporaine. A. Colin, 1927, p.91.
3. René Dumesnil, Gustave Guiches (1860-1935). Le Bouquiniste Français, 40e année, août-septembre, 1960, p.247.
4. Maurice Donnay à Gustave Guiches, Le Figaro, 30 March 1929.
5. Jean Ajalbert. Mémoires à Rebours, Paris, Denoel et Steele, 1936. Volume 1, p.189.
6. Martin Turnell. The Art of French Fiction, Hamish Hamilton. 1959, p.7.
7. See extracts from Guiches' notebooks in Appendix C (xii) and (xiii) in which he indicated work planned and in preparation for various journals.
8. Pierre Keller, op.cit., p.276.
9. Quoted by Pierre Keller, op.cit., pp.276-7.
10. See Appendix D (x ).
11. My experiences in Cahors and Luzech, which had provided the setting for Céleste Prudhomat and L'Ennemi, in August 1972, corroborated General Pierre Keller's criticisms. The Syndicat d'Initiative of both places had no knowledge of Gustave Guiches.

General Keller told me that an attempt had been made, in the years following the Second World War, to revive some of Guiches' work for television. Nothing materialised from these efforts. Some of his work was, however, broadcast between the wars, including his most successful play, Chacun sa Vie.

# APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A

Unpublished Letters Written between  
1869 and 1929

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(i)

Undated. Probably 1869, when Guiches was a pupil at the Collège des Carmes in Cahors. The spelling and punctuation in Guiches' letter are as he wrote them.

Ma chère Céline

Il ya longtemps que je ne t'ai pas écrits mais je vais réparer le temps perdu en t'écrivant une longue lettre. Je t'annoncerai avec joie ma rentrée aux carmes je travaille bien et j'aurai à la fin de cette semaine quatre cartes d'honneur. Je t'annoncerai aussi que j'ai été premier en orthographe. Je vois Jacques et Georges Delbreil chaque jours. Nous sommes déjà allé en promenade au de là du pont st Georges. Je t'annoncerai aussi que le supérieur général des Carmes est mort et une dame Blanche qui n'était pas la maîtresse de caroline. Maman, papa maman plaisir tonton Ernest Caroline moi et.... dont nous avons eu des nouvelles elles va très-bien. J'apprends le latin et je suis fort je serai en septième si ma Grammaire latine était la même chose. Je te dirai aussi qu'il est passé des comédiens mais nous n'avons pas pu aller à la comédie. J'entends la retraite chaque soirs et cela me fait bien du plaisir, nous ne sommes que quatre dans notre dortoir et nous dormons très-bien, nous nous levons chaque matin à cinq heures et il n'est pas jour cela me fait beaucoup de peine. Adieu ma chère Céline je te quitte en t'embrassant de tout mon cœur et en te souhaitant une bonne année à toi et à ta mère ton dévoué cousin

Gustave Guiches

Ma chère Edmée

Ayez bien longtemps que je ne t'ai pas écrit  
mais je suis séparée de temps j'en t'écrivant  
une longue lettre. Je t'annoncerai avec joie ma venue  
aux carmes je travaille bien et j'aurai ce la fin  
de cette semaine quatre cartes d'honneur. Je t'ann  
murai aussi que j'ai été premier en orthographe  
Je vis Jacques et Georges Delbecq chaque jour.  
Nous sommes déjà allés en promenade au de la  
Du pont St Georges. Je t'annoncerai aussi que le  
supérieur général Des Barres est mort et une Dame  
Blanche qui n'était pas la maîtresse de cardinal  
d'Amboise, mais monnon salue tout le monde.

nouvelle elle ne t'a pas écrit. J'apprends le Latin et  
je suis fort je serai en septième si ma Grammaire  
Latine n'est la même chose. Je t'ai aussi que le  
et j'ai pu de monnaie mais nous n'avons pas pu  
aller à la messe. J'entends la messe chaque jour  
et cela me fait bien la plaisir, mais ne sommes  
que quatre sans notre père et nous sommes très  
bien nous nous sommes chaque matin à l'ang  
laises et il n'est pas pour cela me fait beaucoup  
de plaisir. Adieu ma chère Edmée je te quite en  
t'embrassant de tout mon cœur et tout amicalement  
bonne nuit à toi et à ta mère ton frère comme

Guillaume Guichard

(ii) A letter from Charles Buet, 16 July 1883

Honorable l'âcheur !... Je me demandais  
pourquoi vous ne teniez point la promesse  
que vous m'avez faite en partant, et sur  
laquelle je ne comptais d'ailleurs qu'à  
moitié. Votre lettre me rassure : vous n'avez  
pas échangé pour de lointains pays,  
et vous vous gobegez à la cuisine matri-  
nelle qui rassurera vos estomacs  
belaïs par l'abus des nourritures  
capiteuses. Quant à moi je ne vais pas  
bien et je suis accablé d'ennuis ; vous  
le savez assez, au surplus, et je n'ai pas  
besoin de vous ennuier de mes doléances.  
Au cas où vous rencontriez, d'aventure  
dix Louis vagabonds, envoyez les moi,  
je leur offrirai un asile hospitalier.  
Mais vous fréquentiez si bonne compagnie  
que ces dix Louis ne vous accosteront pas.

Vous apprendrez sans aucune stupéfaction  
que Rolland a déménagé de la rue Oudinot  
sans tambour ni trompette, et qu'il  
s'est réfugié, loin des bruits de ce monde,  
dans le giron parissien de mille  
Cécile de Gournay, qui n'est pas la  
"bell'gournayère". Un homme à la  
mer. Les Letisteg m'ont ravi, un  
soir, avec Jules. Je m'y suis amusé.  
Comme un académicien dans une  
boutique de chandronniers. Je n'y  
retournerai plus, — jamais plus.  
Le Chat Noir est devenu brocanteur:  
on n'y va plus. — Colonne est à  
Koufleur. — Voilà tout le nouveau,  
c'est mince, mais ça va puis sous  
en insister.

Je vais vous quitter pour aller chez  
l'immortel B.B.I.A.  
où le clan de la rue Rousselle doit  
être rassemblé! — La Petite Princesse  
a pour elle Dorote. Les cloches  
qui sonnent m'empêchent la tête,  
et m'ont poussé à maraîcher,  
qui me tâche tout à fait. Dites  
lui tout ce que vous voudrez de  
vraie d'artillerie. Voilà tout.  
La demoiselle, ça vous gâche, en vous  
chargeant de mille choses pour  
~~vous~~ et votre père, et en vous  
accablant d'attentionnement la  
mode de chez nous

16<sup>e</sup> rue B.B.I.A.  
Charles

(iii) A letter from Villiers de L'Isle Adam, 18 October 1887



c. 18<sup>th</sup> 1897

Mon cher Guichet,

Vous m'avez dit, je crois, que  
vous passeriez une semaine à Paris  
vers le 1<sup>er</sup> pour deux.

- Je vous ai attendu... mais  
vainement, vous oubliez.

- J'ai passé ce matin, dans le  
numéro de Gil Blas. La causerie  
est finie le dimanche. Je suis  
très à court. Et j'ajoutais de  
finir la journée, rien de plus.

Avez-vous cinq francs d'ici demain?

Votre  
Villiers

(iii)

From Villiers de l'Isle-Adam.

le 18 Xbre, 1887.

Mon cher Guiches,

Vous m'aviez dit, je crois, que vous passeriez me prendre hier soir vers 6h1/2 pour dîner.

- Je vous ai attendu.... mais vainement, jeune oublieux.

- J'ai passé ce matin, dans le numéro du Gil Blas. La caisse est fermée le dimanche. Je suis très à court. Il s'agirait de finir la journée, rien de plus. Avez-vous cinq francs d'ici demain?

Votre

Villiers.

(The first half of this letter was reproduced by Guiches in Le Banquet, Editions Spes, Paris, 1926, p.57)

(iv)

To his wife, 31 janvier, 1888, par voie pneumatique.

Ma toute petite Nanot, Malherbe qui ce soir est tout en or, nous a invités à dîner chez Bréban, Villiers et moi. Je ne peux pas refuser sûrement, ma toute petite Nanot. Je retournerai de bonne heure. A bientôt donc et des millions de baisers de ton Gustave.

To his wife. Undated. Par voie pneumatique.

Ma toute petite Nanot, c'est ce soir que je dîne avec Huysmans et Léon Bloy. Je rentrerai aussi tôt que possible. Je te demande, ma bonne petite Nanot d'être bien sage et de t'ennuyer un peu pour l'amour de moi.

Gustave.

(v)

The Draft of a letter to the director of the Revue Hebdomadaire, undated, probably 1891 or 1892. (found among Guiches' papers.)

Mon cher Directeur,

Je vous remettrai, la fin des épreuves corrigés (Un Cœur Discret) après demain matin, lundi. Je désire, en même temps, causer avec vous d'une idée dont la réalisation serait, je m'en suis assuré, par moi-même, des plus intéressants pour les lecteurs de la Revue.

Ce serait, à côté des articles de chronique littéraire, la création, sous une rubrique permanente, d'un courrier bibliographique fait en petites notes serrées, tel que celui de M. Brunetière sur la couverture de la Revue des deux Mondes.

L'idée n'est pas neuve, mais on peut innover dans la manière de l'appliquer et je vous certifie que son exécution serait accueillie avec le succès le plus vif.

J'ai tâté l'opinion de pas mal de vos lecteurs. Tous ceux que j'ai interrogés ont été unanimes à reconnaître l'intérêt de vos publications tant reproduites qu'inédites, la composition hautement littéraire de la Revue, la direction très artistique qu'elle reçoit, mais ils ont été unanimes à signaler une lacune, l'absence d'une sorte de Bulletin hebdomadaire qui tînt exactement vos lecteurs au courant du mouvement intellectuel.

Il va sans dire, je le répète, que ce courrier n'excluerait pas les grands articles de critique.

Je le comprends comme une série de notes très brèves donnant les aperçus des livres parus, des indiscretions sur ceux à paraître et qui doivent faire événement (Daudet, Zola, Renan, Goncourt etc...) les nouvelles artistiques, la petite



chronique des salons littéraires etc.... Mais il faut donner à ces notes un intérêt de lecture le plus vif possible et un moyen infaillible pour arriver à ce résultat, c'est de les faire les mieux informées qui soient, habilement variées, et, à l'occasion assez malicieuses assez piquantes pour créer autour d'elles un mouvement de curiosité.

Bien entendu, mon cher Directeur, je vous demande, si vous acceptez mon idée, la rédaction de ce courrier hebdomadaire. J'ai fait au Figaro, pendant trois mois, une série de silhouettes féminines (Femmes de Lettres) qui eut dans la public spécial auquel elle était destinée un véritable retentissement. Les "Silhouettes se rapprochaient par certains côtés des notes en question. Je fréquente à peu près dans tous les salons littéraires parisiens chez Daudet, Goncourt, Mmes Adam, Gyp, etc.... Je suis en relations avec tous mes confrères, mes aînés comme ceux de ma génération. Je collabore au Figaro, au Gil Blas, au Temps, à la Nouvelle Revue, à la Revue Bleue etc.... Je suis donc en mesure de donner les informations les plus diverses, les plus curieuses et les plus sensationnelles.

Du reste nous pourrions essayer, si vous m'accordez le temps de faire de cette rubrique ce que je désire en faire, j'ai la certitude d'apporter, dans un délai très court, à votre Revue, un de ses plus importants éléments de succès.

Nous causerons de tout cela lundi. Excusez-moi de vous avoir si longuement développé mon idée et croyez-moi, mon cher Directeur, votre collaborateur bien dévoué....

Gustave Guiches

(vi)

Letter to Jules Claretie, Administrateur de l'Académie Française, dated 28 June 1894. This copy was found among Guiches' papers.

Je n'ai pas voulu M. l'Administrateur et cher maître, que ma réponse vous parvînt à un moment où les questions de théâtre faisaient place à de tout autres préoccupations. Aujourd'hui je me risque à vous l'adresser et sollicite toute votre indulgence en raison de sa longueur.

Votre opinion se résume à ceci. 1<sup>o</sup> "Un bon premier acte d'exposition. 2<sup>o</sup> Un bon deuxième acte avec une scène de 1er ordre. 3<sup>o</sup> Un troisième moins bienvenu que les deux précédents. 4<sup>o</sup> "Une langue ferme et nette et des caractères très étudiés. Ce bilan n'est pas pour décourager, mais je ne puis rester insensibles aux objections que vous m'adressez.

Vous me dites, d'abord, mon cher maître, que Jayan, mon principal personnage avec Chavasseur, rappelle Vernouillet. Comment cela se peut-il? Vernouillet est un maître chanteur, Jayan est un usurier. Vernouillet représente la presse véreuse, Jayan la spéculation. Vernouillet contre Charrier c'est le gueux essayant de s'emparer d'une fortune par le chantage. Jayan, aux prises avec Chavasseur c'est le capital en lutte avec la propriété. Le personnage d'Augier se présente timidement et c'est le marquis d'Auberine qui lui suggère son effronterie. Le mien au contraire attaque d'emblée. Je ne vois donc entre l'Usurier Jayan et le maître chanteur Vernouillet d'autres liens qu'une commune ambition et un cynisme dont l'expression diffère radicalement. Et ces liens se retrouvent chez la plupart des personnages composés dans cet ordre d'idées. Giraud de la Question d'argent? M. de Brives de Mercadet et tant d'autres dont le

souvenir m'échappe sont des exploiters et des cyniques au même titre que Vernouillet. On ne les confond pourtant pas, sans quoi il ne serait plus permis de créer des amoureux, des avarés, des hommes politiques etc;... parce qu'existent Roméo et Juliet, Harpagon, Rabagas etc...

Les questions d'argent, me dites-vous, cher maître, sont insupportables à la scène et la viticulture ne doit pas l'être moins. Ne serait-il pourtant pas excessif d'exclure du théâtre par la raison que les essais de ce genre n'ont pas tous réussi jusqu'à ce jour des moyens d'action tels que la passion de l'argent ou celle de la terre et non spécialement de la viticulture. Et à l'insuccès bien relatif de Mercadet, on peut opposer, par exemple, le succès tout récent de l'Engrenage, une pièce aussi aride que possible où il n'est traité que de politique rurale, d'argent, d'industrie, de bas tripotages électoraux, sans qu'un seul mot d'amour y soit prononcé.

Permettez-moi donc, mon cher maître, de vous exprimer mon désir et en même temps le regret que ce désir ne soit pas conforme à vos obligeants conseils.

Je ne garde que fort peu d'illusions sur un résultat que vous me faites prévoir et votre lettre me donne à comprendre que je n'ai pas à compter pour le succès de ma lecture sur votre sympathique concours. Aussi défavorables que puissant être les conditions dans lesquelles je me trouve je tiens à subir l'épreuve de cette lecture et il ne me reste plus qu'à vous prier de bien vouloir me faire connaître l'époque vers laquelle elle pourra avoir lieu.

Avec tous mes remerciements pour la cordiale courtoisie dont vous avez bien voulu m'honorer et de nouveau toutes mes excuses pour cette lettre interminable, agréez, je vous prie, M. l'Administrateur et cher maître, l'assurance de ma haute considération et de mes dévoués sentiments.

Paris 28 juin 94 Jeudi

Gustave Guiches.

Guiches tells us in *Le Spectacle* that he submitted Consciences, his first play, to the Comédie Française in 1887. It was rejected by Edouard Cadol, although he found the subject interesting, and by Claretie, who said the subject was dangerous for the public. Then, after Philippe Destal (1892), Guiches must have decided to try again with Consciences, as this letter shows. He tells us in his memoirs that he read it to Maurice Donnay and Lucien Guitry in 1895, but he does not mention this approach to the Comédie Française in 1894. Although the play is not mentioned by name in this letter, its subject, phylloxera and its effect on the consciences of the characters, clearly refers to a dramatisation of the story of L'Ennemi, with characters of the same names. Guitry told Guiches that the subject was not suitable for the Théâtre de la Renaissance and suggested that he should read it to Antoine. Having had the play rejected a total of four times, Guiches obviously abandoned the idea, especially as Guitry encouraged him to write a new play for him and Guiches immediately began writing Snob.

The dramatisation of L'Ennemi was also the subject of correspondence between Guiches and the publisher E. Fasquelle, who was interested in the project. According to Henri Austruy, the play was to be performed at the Odéon but nothing came of it. See La Nouvelle Revue, Quatrième Série, 1936. Gustave

Guiches, Sa vie, ses oeuvres, ses amitiés. Vol. 142, jan-  
avril, p.17.

(vii)

From Maurice Donnay de l'Académie Française

le 7 Mai '14

7, RUE DE FLORENCE

Chers amis,

Je reviens de l'A.F. (Académie Française) où  
l'on a discuté les titres des divers candidats au P.T.  
(Prix Toirac) car il y en avait deux. Je peux te dire  
avec joie et fierté que j'ai été ton heureux avocat. En  
un mot, en cinq mots plutôt: tu as le prix Toirac. Embrasse  
Jeanne, Marguerite pour moi et que Marguerite et Jeanne  
t'embrassent pour moi.

Ton vieux camarade

Maurice Donnay

(viii)

The incomplete manuscript draft of a letter to the publishers  
of La Tueuse in 1921.

....le présenter à vous sans avoir pu dépouiller sa tenue  
de travail. Mais il est malgré ces surcharges, de lecture  
facile, une cinquantaine de pages manuscrites sont écrites  
au recto et au verso. N'ayant ni aucune possibilité de les  
faire recopier à la main ou dactylographier, je vous deman-  
derai, mon cher Directeur, de bien vouloir les faire taper  
à la machine, bien entendu à mes frais qui seront retenus  
sur le paiement définitif du feuilleton.

Vous trouvez à mon scénario un décor réactionnaire. Je

peux vous assurer que La Tueuse n'est pas réactionnaire du tout, loin de là! La Tueuse c'est la Politique d'intérêt personnel et mon personnage réactionnaire écope à ce point de vue autant que l'auteur mais plus durement! Il n'y a d'attaqué dans mon livre que la politique d'égoïsme et ceux qui la pratiquent avec le plus de cynisme seront les premiers à applaudir, vous n'en doutez pas! Du reste, lorsque nous en serons aux épreuves, si vous jugez quelques expressions modifiables, je serai quant au texte tout à votre disposition.

Je vous demande, mon cher Directeur, de bien vouloir, dès que vous aurez reçu mon manuscrit, me faire adresser, avec votre accusé de réception, la somme entendue de quinze cents francs par lettre chargée, ce sera, pour moi, plus commode que le chèque ou le mandat-poste.

Je vous accuserai aussitôt de la réception et, dès ma rentrée à Paris, vous demanderai quelques minutes de votre temps précieux pour....

(ix)

Two unpublished letters from La Princesse Murat in reply to letters from Guiches in which he had asked if she would collaborate financially in a film production of La Vie Amoureuse de Murat.

FIRST LETTER

28, rue de Monseau,  
Paris  
le 13 avril, 1923

Monsieur,

Etant allée à la campagne ces jours derniers il m'a été impossible de répondre plus tôt à votre lettre. Il est évident que la production d'un film consacré à Murat est loin de nous laisser indifférente, mais vous comprendrez que je

dois vous avouer tout d'abord l'incompétence où je suis de la technique cinématographique d'une telle entreprise autant que de sa réalisation financière. Il serait donc utile à mon sens que vous puissiez le plus tôt qu'il vous sera possible de me fournir tout d'abord une étude sur la réalisation du film lui-même, distribution des artistes, metteur en scène etc., sans parler naturellement du scénario. Deuxième point capital, une étude presque définitive des différents moyens financiers qui pourraient permettre la réalisation que vous poursuivez, soit que le film soit exploité directement par une société spéciale ou bien par une société française d'édition connue. Veuillez tenir ici l'expression de mes sentiments très sympathiques.

Le Princesse Murat

Reply to another letter from Guiches.

le 3 mai 1923

Monsieur,

En réponse à la lettre que vous m'avez écrite en date du 26 avril je tiens à vous dire qu'il me paraît difficile et même impossible que le prince et moi fassions personnellement les démarches nécessaires pour réunir la somme de 1.200.000 francs qu'il semble devoir falloir d'après l'estimation de l'Association Générale Cinématographique qui se chargerait de la production du film dont vous avez projeté la création. Nous avons toujours décidé de ne jamais concéder ni provoquer aucun placement financier auprès de personnalités de notre entourage et il faudrait que vous vous chargiez vous-même de pressentir toutes les personnes qui seraient susceptibles de participer à cette affaire qui peut être excellente. Nous-mêmes dans ces conditions pourrions y souscrire pour une certaine part.



Croyez à mes sentiments distingués

La Princesse Murat

(x) A letter from Sacha Guitry

Chère Marie  
 au sein Jentry (mon père)  
 Bon attend demain  
 matin Mercredi  
 à midi  $\frac{1}{4}$  St Vendôme  
 pour prendre ensemble  
 le repas.

affectionnement  
 à V. G.

Sacha Guitry  
 X

(xi) A letter from the Théâtre Libre, 22 January 1888



Paris 22 janvier 1888

X

Monsieur

Serez-vous assez aimable pour  
venir le plus tôt possible au  
théâtre libre, de neuf heures à  
onze heures du soir ? Vos quatre  
d'heure doivent passer le mois  
prochain.

Je compte sur vous, Monsieur,  
pour prévenir M. Savodan, et je  
vous prie d'agréer mes salutations  
distinguées.

Henri Matisse

Le ritane général

## APPENDIX B

(i) The Manuscript of L'Imprévu

The manuscript of L'Imprévu found among Guiches' papers appears to comprise a minimum of four different stages in the development of the novel, three of which are incomplete. The first stage has pages numbered 3-12, in black ink, and relates the beginning of the story from the point of view of a writer, Flavien Logier, to whom Léon Dussol, who is about to kill himself, sends his story in the form of a manuscript headed Ma Suprême Confession. Logier, trying to recollect how he first met Dussol, recalls his own native province and his struggle against his father and family in order to be allowed to take up literature as a career. He remembers his ambition, his determination to leave the narrow confines of provincial life, and the literary evening of Alain Pécal in Paris, at which he first met Léon Dussol. Only then does he turn to Dussol's manuscript and begin to read it.

The second version consists of a series of fragmented stages. All are numbered in black ink. Pages 2-15, of which page 7 is missing, begin with Logier reading Dussol's manuscript without any preamble about himself. Now it is Dussol who is anxious to leave his native town, irritated by its provinciality. The manuscript tells of his choice of a career in letters and his early efforts. It continues with the letter from his childhood friend, Adeline, in which she announces her visit, and gives an account of her parents. Guiches gives their name here as Delrieux, but in the

published version he changed it to d'Avrilon and at the same time changed their relationship to that of guardians. Adeline's visit is here preceded by an unexpected and unwelcome visit from the local priest who also tries to dissuade him from leaving. The second group of pages, numbered 15-18, gives an account of Dussol's reading and his plans for his future career, which include election to the Académie Française. It ends with the letter from Adeline. Pages 21-37 offer slight variations on some of these earlier pages and continue with an account of Dussol's first days in Paris and his conversations with Pécal.

The pages of the third version are numbered, in black ink, 1-55, several of which are missing. It begins with the letter from Dussol to Logier, followed by a briefer account of Logier's reaction to it. Dussol's story no longer carries the title of a confession and, instead of killing himself, Dussol has taken a job as a civil servant in the provinces. The manuscript, which is incomplete, ends with Dussol's threat to sell his library and give up writing, as part of his campaign to humiliate Adeline.

Stage four consists of an almost complete version of the novel with pages 2-108, numbered in red. Some pages are missing and there are three different endings. A number of the pages in this version were originally part of the third version and have been renumbered in red. Stage four is substantially the same in story and presentation as the published version of 1891. The device of introducing the story in the form of a posthumous confession has been rejected and the character of Flavien Logier suppressed.

From these manuscript pages we can trace the development of the novel, in the course of which not only the 'cadre' of the posthumous confession was modified and then dropped, but with it a quantity of semi-autobiographical and other descriptive material. The ending was also modified, allowing Dussol to reject suicide and find solace in escape to America and marriage to his American friend, Mary.

Among pages which were casualties of the 1891 edition are those which refer to the provincial town and atmosphere, which first Logier and then Dussol left behind them to start a career as a writer in Paris. They tell of the narrow outlook and irritating sameness of life in their native town. The reasons for omitting these pages may be simply those of economy and pace. Certainly a marginal note on page 31 of the fourth version says "Abrégez la description". Some of Guiches' references to the provincial town and its people appear critical and derisory. This, together with mention of individuals who may have recognised themselves, would perhaps have alienated his fellow countrymen had they been published. It would be wrong to assume that these pages are purely autobiographical and accurate in every detail. However, the inspiration for them is so clearly Guiches' memories of the early stages of his own career that there is inevitably a good deal of personal reminiscence here. Some pages which refer to the early literary efforts of Dussol, and his difficulties, may have been ultimately rejected by Guiches as seeming too much like his own confession. He may indeed have abandoned the device of the posthumous confession for the same reason.

Unpublished extracts from the Manuscript of *L'Imprévu*

1. Version 2B, page 15

Je relus Lamartine, le divin Musset, Victor Hugo en ses bons endroits et quelques autres aussi que la génération actuelle accable de ses plus amers mépris, tels que le grand Ponsard, Ducis, Baour-Lormian, Loumet, Guiraud, Millevoie, Laprade.... j'en passe et des meilleurs!

Il m'était impossible, après mes fructueuses lectures, de ne pas m'occuper des procédés de fabrication. J'achetai donc les meilleures prosodies, d'instructifs dictionnaires de rimes et des dictionnaires de synonymes avec leurs suppléments.

Je tâtai de la poésie épique, ne sachant pas encore ce genre démodé. Je m'aventurai dans le lyrisme. J'essayai de l'art didactique et des poèmes fugitifs, du sonnet, de l'épithalame, de l'épigramme, du quatrain. Je tournai des odes et m'abimai dans des rondels. Mais rien ne jaillissait. Mes productions étaient de forme irréprochable; pourtant il leur manquait ce je ne sais quoi... Enfin j'abandonnai la poésie et me jetai dans la prose à corps perdu.... Et puis la carrière du prosateur était plus pratique, plus raisonnable que celle de poète à une époque foncièrement positive où l'Idéal est rétribué dans des proportions dérisoires, lorsqu'il n'est pas bafoué par les bateliers de la presse et les courtisans de l'opinion.

La vie ouvrait devant moi de riantes perspectives. Je n'en voulus voir qu'une seule, une belle et grave avenue, rectiligne, austère, à l'extrémité de laquelle sur le magique horizon se dressait surmontée de sa vaste coupole, la masse imposante de l'Institut.



L'Académie! Ce fut par cette promesse d'immortalité faite en moi-même que je voulus préluder à mon entrée dans l'arène littéraire dont le sol est hélas! jonché de tant de vaincus et, disons-le, de tant de martyrs!

Je graduai ma vie, la divisai en étapes mûrement combinées et habilement mesurées. A vingt-cinq ans, je devais avoir publié sous ce titre: Essais une étude historique et analytique sur l'Académie, depuis son origine jusqu'aux quarante, nos contemporains. Ce travail révélerait chez son auteur de sérieuses qualités critiques et, par des considérations laudatives avec réserve autant que par de fines ironies, se désignerait de lui-même à la bienveillante attention de l'Institut. A trente ans mes deux romans l'un satirique, l'autre psychologique, ce dernier publié dans la revue, seraient couronnés par l'Académie Française qui, dès lors, voudrait bien discerner en son dévoué serviteur les éléments d'un candidat. Après quelques à-propos aux anniversaires classiques ma pièce, Le Colibri (le sujet est à trouver) serait jouée à la Comédie Française et je commencerais les démarches officielles en les salons autorisés. J'aurais alors trente-cinq ans. Il ne resterait plus à effectuer que les visites. Puis viendrait l'élection, la nomination et la réception, les trois actes suprêmes dont je ne pouvais prévoir l'accomplissement avant l'âge de cinquante ans révolus.

These extracts from an early version of L'Imprévu, a work of fiction and therefore not necessarily autobiographical, nonetheless reflect the reality of Guiches' early attempts

at verse and an early interest in the Académie Française. A comparison of the schedule here outlined by Léon Dussol with the events of Guiches' own career shows some interesting points of similarity. Guiches published L'Imprévu, a satire on the theory and philosophy of positivism, in 1890 when he was thirty years old. His next novel, Philippe Destal, published two years later, was a psychological study. Neither was, however, honoured by the Académie Française. He had to wait until 1917 for his novel Les Deux Soldats to receive the Prix Née from the Académie. In the theatre, his first play to be performed at the Comédie Française was Le Nuage, 1901, when he was forty-two years old. When he was sixty-seven, in 1927, he was nominated as a candidate for the Académie but subsequently withdrew to allow Abel Hermant to be elected.

## 2. Version 1, page 3

Comme les autres il s'était soustrait aux stériles spleens de province, lassé des distractions départementales, des flâneries sur la Place d'Armes dans le fracas de musiques militaires, des discussions futiles aux heures des apéritifs, des rances mélos du théâtre municipal, des fumeries du "café chantant" et de la bonté des dames mûres dans les sauteries de la société. Il avait fui, décampé, dans une agile horreur, devant cette béate médiocrité d'âmes et d'esprits.

Quelles luttes avant ce dénouement! La famille entretenait des rêves plus sérieux. Après le baccalauréat conquis avec mention honorable, au dessert du repas de triomphe, on avait discuté sur le choix d'une carrière. Contributions, - les directes et les indirectes, - et les bifurcations sur

l'Enregistrement, le Timbre et les Domaines avaient été proposées, jugées, conspuées. Même sort était réservé aux services vicinaux et à ceux de la Navigation. Les mères s'insurgèrent au seul nom de Saint-Cyr. Une tante qui appartenait au Tiers-Ordre souleva des rafales de gaieté en offrant le Sacerdoce. Sans succès on aborda les corps savants et ce ne fut qu'aux avenir<sup>s</sup> réputés libéraux que, soudainement, le père proclama: "Voilà ce qu'il me faut! - Il se tourna vers Flavien et, avec l'autorité d'une injonction: "tu feras ton droit. Je me suis renseigné. Tu passeras près de nous les deux premières années. Notre ami Benjamin t'inculquera les éléments. Et puis nous verrons pour ton doctorat à t'expédier vers la capitale. Bref, tu seras magistrat, mais retiens bien ceci, - pas de magistrature assise! Rien que la Magistrature debout!

Le silence fut presque solennel. On n'entendit, un instant, que les claquements de langue de quelques vieillards sirotant des eaux-de-vie.

Après quelques mois de vaines études, Flavien saccageait les illusions de son père et culbutait cette magistrature mise debout avec une despotisme si égoïstement paternel. A son tour, il proclamait: "Je veux faire de la Littérature. Vous ne pourrez m'en empêcher. J'ai la vocation.

La parole était enflammée à souhait, ses yeux avaient le fanatisme d'une indomptable résolution. La colère de M. Logier fut désarmée. Il essaya du raisonnement, dévida le martyrologe des artistes, prophétisa l'hôpital et finit pas céder devant l'inflexible insistance de celui que, désormais, il appela "mon malheureux fils".

This account of Flavien Logier's conflict with his father on the subject of a career is very similar to Guiches' account of his own experience as told in Au Banquet de la Vie (1925). On page 5 of the same manuscript version of L'Imprévu, Guiches gives an account of Léon Dussol's father, whose characteristics seem to contrast with those of M. Logier. Together they underline Guiches' preoccupation with the part his own father played in his own career.

### 3. Version 3, page 38

Mon roman n'avancait qu'avec une désolante lenteur. Chaque matin, vers dix heures, je m'asseyais devant ma table de travail et là, je restais de longs instants, ruminant les phrases, appelant éperdument l'expression qui refusait de se rendre, m'arrêtant à chaque ligne devant de renaissantes difficultés. Vainement je relisais les pages écrites pour stimuler ma pensée. Une suite de mots défilaient sous ma plume, puis, l'inspiration s'essoufflait et ma main s'immobilisait comme si les ressorts qui lui donnaient le mouvement s'étaient subitement rompus. Mes nerfs s'exaspéraient dans l'inutile acharnement de cette lutte. Bientôt même la force de rallier des idées me faisait défaut. Je me désespérais à calculer l'effrayante quantité de pages qu'il me fallait encore écrire avant d'avoir terminé la première partie de mon roman... Puis, tout-à-coup, survenait une furieuse reprise de travail. Vingt lignes étaient écrites d'une traite avec une imprévue spontanéité d'exécution.

Léon Dussol is here relating his difficulties when writing his novel Le Colibri. Undoubtedly, however, Guiches was thinking of his own experience when writing Céleste Prudhomat (1886). As the next extract conveys very effectively, Guiches was more than a little worried during his early days in Paris that time was passing and he had not yet published anything.

#### 4. Version 3, pages 19-20

Je me trouvais sans forces, brisé d'avance, honteux de mes illusions et désireux de rebrousser chemin. Mais pouvais-je retourner à Montmorillon? Il faudrait inventer des prétextes pour motiver un si brusque revirement dont la véritable cause, devinée sans peine, me condamnerait pour toujours aux rires de cette bourgeoisie si grandement impressionnée lorsque je lui avais signifié l'importance de mes ambitions, à l'heure de mon départ. Je prévoyais les sourires qui salueraient mon retour. J'entendais les phrases: "Vous nous revenez! Déjà! Tant mieux! C'est la rentrée de l'enfant prodigue, nous allons tuer le veau gras. Hé bien, vous arrivez bredouille? Vous abandonnez la partie? Vous en avez déjà assez de tenter fortune. Vous avez bigrement raison! On n'est nulle part mieux que chez soi. Nous vous avons assez prévenu, n'est-ce pas? Les avis ne vous ont pas manqué."

La terreur du ridicule mérité qui désormais entacherait d'une grotesque légende mon existence de province m'empêcha de renoncer à mes projets et de quitter Paris, chassé par la soudaine panique de mes déceptions. A méditer les

désastreuses conséquences d'une pareille fuite, mon courage se raffermir. Je résolus de me mêler au mouvement des plaisirs parisiens, d'étourdir en eux ma solitude, d'assourdir par les rires des fêtes le silence mortel que je portais en moi.

Chaque soir, durant quelques semaines, je suivis les spectacles, plus intéressé par l'opulent coup d'œil des salles de premières que par les événements tragiques ou joyeux qui se développaient sur la scène entre le côté cour et le côté jardin. Parmi la foule des habits noirs, j'essayais de reconnaître, - en les comparant à leurs photographies exposées dans les passages, - les critiques pérorant par groupes, aux entr'actes, les uns adossés aux fauteuils, articulant de calmes impressions, d'autres passionnés sabrant avec des gestes de colère les arguments de leurs interlocuteurs, quelques-uns pensifs, le buste en avant, s'appuyant à des cannes massives dont la pomme d'argent reposait sur leur plastron.... Après le spectacle, j'allais m'asseoir dans un café de nuit du Boulevard.... Sous les successives poussées des arrivants, les portes ouvertes jetaient dans les salles de nouvelles fournées de couleurs et de nouveaux éclats.

In exactly the same way Guiches too had begun by observing the behaviour of Paris society. It was not until he had met the poet Rollinat that he realised that the inspiration he was waiting for was to be found in his own native province.

## 5. Version 3, page 31

Nous montâmes la spirale d'un étroit escalier à la rampe voilée d'un jupon de serge. La porte s'ouvrit sur une salle vaste et fumeuse aux murs de laquelle des peintures affichaient, en des tons exaspérés, des épopées burlesques d'animaux de basse-couret aussi des femmes en des attitudes de sphinx. Au centre, un billard vissait au plancher ses quatre pieds massifs portant, en pierre de sacrifice, l'entablement du tapis vert. Autour des bandes qui enclavaient d'un glacis de bois humide et luisant le rectangle aux carambolages, s'alignaient, par rangées symétriques, les tables de consommation.

Quelques jeunes gens en veston largement ouvert et le col ceint de cravates à noeuds flottants formaient des groupes clair-semés sur lesquels descendait, en plafond de brouillard, la fumée des pipes dont ils entretenaient silencieusement les fourneaux. Les uns étaient renversés sur leurs chaises, exhalaient des couronnes de vapeur. D'autres serraient dans leurs mains la poignée d'énormes chopes et creusaient des vallées en soufflant sur la crème des bières. Au fond de la salle, une femme, la tête embrasée de cheveux roux jouait au piano des danses créoles d'une cadence éolienne qui endormait le rêve dans un bercement de hamac.

Notre arrivée fut à peine remarquée. Tous les regards s'étaient dirigés vers la porte qui venait de s'ouvrir et s'étaient détournés aussitôt. Cependant l'indifférence de cet accueil fut tempérée chez la plupart d'une familiarité presque cordiale s'exprimant par des : "bonjour vieux. Le



génie va toujours bien? Bonjour mon gros Pécal. On ne vous voit plus."

Le maître s'accommodait de ces libres façons. A chacun des assistants, il me présentait et accentuait d'une inclination cérémonieuse l'échange des noms. Je me sentais visé par des regards curieux et méfiants. Le plus grand nombre répondit à mon salut par une muette poignée de main. Quelques-uns, sans se départir d'une réserve défensive, me questionnèrent: "Avez-vous déjà publié quelque chose? Etes-vous poète? Faites-vous du métier pour vivre? - A toutes ces questions, je répondis avec simplicité: "Je n'ai encore rien produit." Ma présence sembla bientôt être oublié. Je fumai de nombreuses cigarettes en écoutant les propos qui s'échangeaient autour de moi, mais les noms des auteurs et des ouvrages que j'entendais citer m'étant tout à fait inconnus, je ne pouvais prendre part aux conversations, hasarder même un sourire à des plaisanteries, dont j'ignorais l'objet.

La porte s'ouvrit et, par fournées se talonnant, les unes les autres, dégorgea dans la salle une turbulente multitude d'arrivants. La voix de Pécal s'épuisait à me présenter à chacun des nouveaux venus. Cependant la cohue devint telle qu'il fut obligé de simplifier ses explications et de se borner à me désigner les groupes par l'idée ou la formule qui les distinguaient. Je vis des romantiques chenus, des parnassiens à barbiches Louis treize sous des averses de cheveux, des réalistes affectant une impassibilité souveraine, des naturalistes débraillés, des impressionnistes recherchant des phrases typiques, des coloristes arborant des cravates

sembables à des oriflammes, des idéalistes aux yeux distraits, des décadents, des instrumentistes, des symbolistes et des modernistes dont les élégantes recherches dénonçaient le culte de l'actualité.

Chaque groupe paraissait détenir un monopole littéraire, des paroles brevetées, une spécialité d'art hors laquelle toute (sic) autre tentative n'était que méprisable contrefaçon. Entre fidèles d'une même église, l'exécration mutuelle ne se contenait plus. Les coreligionnaires ne se parlaient, semblait-il, qu'avec leurs canines. Ils se dévisageaient avec des regards chargés à mitraille et se confirmaient par des louanges meurtrières leur réciproque admiration.

These pages, omitted from the published version, are, once again, a reflection of Guiches' experiences in the literary coteries, where he met most of the famous men of letters and aspiring young writers of his day. With characteristic wit, he suggests the same disillusionment with the literary movements of the time as he expressed in his letter to Jules Huret (Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire, Charpentier, Paris, 1891, pp.254-257). Guiches may well have felt that this portrayal of his fellow writers would cause offence, hence its omission from the final text.

(ii) The Manuscript of Philippe Destal  
and Extracts from Guiches' Notebook.

Among the manuscripts of this novel, which Mademoiselle Marguerite Guiches made available to me, with the help of M. Jean Pagès, are four different versions of the beginning of the novel.

The first version, under the title L'Autre, begins with Philippe Destal mourning the death of his wife Maria. (In later versions Philippe does not marry until Chapter VII of the novel and his wife's name is Adrienne.) Details of the castle and Philippe's ancestors come later on in this early version, followed by a detailed account of the theological preoccupations of Philippe's uncle, the abbé Destal, who brings Philippe up after the death of his parents. This early MS., which is incomplete, consisting of only 24 pages, makes only a brief mention of Guillaume and Jean Destal, whereas the Prologue of the 1892 edition gives a clear account of these two men, the grandfather and father of Philippe, and of Jean's wife, whose stories are important in the formation of Philippe's character.

The second and third versions of the beginning of the novel closely resemble each other and show important changes. First the title has been changed to 'A Genoux', indicating the importance of the religious or mystical aspect of the story. Secondly these later pages both begin with a description of the situation and the architecture of the château de Roussillon. The following pages of this MS., which is again incomplete, ending at page 184 and with several pages missing, tell the story in very much the same way as the 1892 edition.

S. Autre.

fiant aures intendentes, vocem deprecationis  
 mee de Profundis

111

Mon Dieu ! Donnez-moi la résignation puisque  
votre Volonté m'impose l'existence. Mais abaissez ma  
peine car je sens tous les affreux effets qu'une telle  
verse la torture de l'attente de disordre la vertu de mon  
espoir. Vous ai-je inévitablement offensé ? Ai-je murmuré  
contre vous, lorsque vous m'avez frappé. Dans mon cœur,  
dans ma chair, dans mon sang ! Lorsque vous m'avez

mis Celle que je croyais mienne, n'ai-je pas <sup>recouvert</sup> ~~abandonné~~  
 'étouffé mes inspirations, délaissé  
~~l'accomplissement de~~ ma détresse, ~~abandonné~~ <sup>abîmé</sup> ma douleur  
 devant le mystère de votre Puissance ? N'ai-je pas proclamé  
 votre bonté <sup>tant d'une</sup> ~~tant d'une~~ votre bras s'abaissant sur son bien ?  
 O le sort étouffé

→ Oni j'ai fait cela. ~~recesses~~ <sup>sempiternus</sup> → lorsque les yeux de Maria, de ma femme, de celle que vous m'avez <sup>filles</sup> seulement confiée, ma souffrance ne

→ Les supplices infligés dont vous savez si généralement martyriser les chrétiens, pasteurs

Est-elle par-aussi-tôt transformée en la docile esclave du  
Monastère, — pour l'éternité cette fois, — d'un  
bonheur dont toute terrible saqueuse avait fait la plus  
éphémère des illusions ! Cette espérance est-elle donc  
coupable ! N'est-elle pas la plus humble des soumissions  
la plus fervente prostration de ma misère devant votre  
adorable souveraineté ? N'est-ce pas, mon Dieu, pour moi  
n'exaucer-vous pas ma prière ? Le s'arrache des plus  
profondeurs de mon ~~poitrine~~ âme. Elle est la convulsion de  
mon douleur. Mes paroles sont mes larmes. Mes regards  
crient grâce. Mes bras sont sans cesse tendus vers Vous.

# A genoux

les montagnes mortifiées  
les chèvres

Un site en ses configurations n'exprime mieux  
que celui-ci l'effacement originelle.  
Le Chateau lui-même ne de la dédicace  
ajoutait à une dédicace la même la même  
et de sa autorité.

## Prologue

D'une tiare de murailles, Rouillon  
fleuraient la montagne. Surgi des broussailles, les ruines édificient  
un étonnement signifiant sur la crayeuse uniformité du plateau.

Les six tours surmontant les angles, toutes écartées  
de leurs pyramidales tortues d'étain, mais dominées encore par  
la seule colonne d'une échauquette hisant en hune sa lanterne  
cristalline, bombait des balcons fenestres de meurtrières, larges  
pour les défilés et dégageant leurs entrailles de pierre en flots d'ombre  
par des déchirures éternelles que les lièvres s'efforçaient de recouvrir  
et de cicatrifier. Quatre d'entre elles, à d'égaux hauteurs nivelées,  
montaient en cierge. De grandes façades intactes les reliaient,  
ajoutées de fenêtres basses à méfiantes ouvertures, armées de  
volets vert-pâle ébranlés par des arquets d'ouragan et noirs  
par les tommes des pluies. Ainsi que fondues sur elles-mêmes,  
les autres étaient des cuves de mosaïques arrondissant leurs  
margelles de puisards. Un pont enjambait les donnes sont  
une foisonnante végétation combait la profondeur et du lit  
desquelles apparaissait, au ras du sol, la cime de futures  
souterraines et les branchages d'arbustes aventureux.

~~Le site en ses configurations n'exprime mieux  
que celui-ci l'effacement originelle.  
Le Chateau lui-même ne de la dédicace  
ajoutait à une dédicace la même la même  
et de sa autorité.~~

Certains jours, sous des affaissements de ciel  
pluvieux, l'apparition féodale s'agrandissait de toute la tiare

# A genoux.

## Prologue

### I

Sur la stérile uniformité du plateau, les ruines de Roussillon surgies des broussailles édifiaient un étonnement seigneurial.

Les zig-zags dorjonnant les angles, toutes écriées de leurs pyramidales toitures d'étain, mais encore dominées par la svelte colonne d'une échiquette hisant en hune sa lanterne crevée,ombaient des bahuts fenestres de menuiseries, largement pourfendus et dégorgeant leurs entrailles de pierre, en flots d'ombre, par des déchirures énormes que les lièvres s'efforçaient de reconstruire et de cicatriser? Chacune d'entre elles, à d'égales hauteurs nivelées, montaient en cierge. De grandes façades intactes les reliaient, ajourées de fenêtres basses, à méchante ouverture, armées de volets vert-pâle, ébranlés par des assauts d'ouragan et moirés par les remilles des pluies. Ainsi que fondues sur elles-mêmes, les arêtes étaient des curves de mosaïque arrondissant leurs margelles, de puisards. Un pont enjamrait les donnes dont un foisonnement végétation comblait la profondeur et du lit desquelles apparaissait au ras du sol, la cime des futaies souterraines et les branchages d'arbustes aventureux.

Certains jours, sous des affaissements de ciels pluvieux, l'apparition féodale s'agrandissait de toute la <sup>triste</sup>



# A genoux

## Prologue.

Au lendemain de la Révolution, Guillaume Destal acheta le château de Morillon en Chercy. Le propriétaire, un paysan, taccagait avec méthode les débris de la forteresse. Il avait <sup>gagné</sup> ~~reconnu~~ les deux tours s'avant-garde. Les principaux corps de bâtiments s'étaient écroulés sous l'irréductible activité de sa pioche. Il roînait, par tombereaux, les dentelles des corniches et t'érait, pour ses étables, les larges pans de fresques illustrant la galerie qui conduisait à la chapelle du manoir. Il ne restait que la carcasse extérieure, s'ime, marquetée d'ailevons inentamable, lorsque Destal intervint et se proposa comme acquereur. Le prix offert éblouit le paysan.

Le château datait du douzième siècle. Ses dépendances s'étendaient aux territoires de Maxon, de S.<sup>t</sup> Pierre La Fenille et ses cachots pouvaient contenir cinq-cents prisonniers. Un siège qu'il soutint contre les huguenots ouvrit les premières <sup>remparts</sup> ~~tranchées~~ de ses ~~tranchées~~. Alors les six tours ~~florissantes~~ pointaient leurs flèches et les armoiries des Comtes de Morillon blasonnaient de leurs cartouches les façades, Chamarrèrent les manteaux des cheminées, fleurissaient les croisées rangées sur la cour d'honneur et celles qui regardaient les champs.

Guillaume Destal fit rectifier les batisses internes sur les plans de constructions primitives. Les croisées se renforcèrent dans l'épaisseur des murs. Une solennité recépée emplit les pièces, et les meubles perdirent toute majesté dans les cadres immenses qui narguaient gravement et silencieusement leur récente intrusion.

Dans le temps où Morillon disposait de toute sa puissance féodale, les Destal étaient marchands d'apiers à Cahors et tenaient la tête de la corporation. La fortune ne leur avait, <sup>en aucune circonstance</sup> ~~parvenue~~ fait défaut. De génération en génération, elle rouvrait la patiente avalanche toujours grossie, jamais salie, même à cette époque où dévissait la ~~tristesse~~ contagion des gams faciles et où les amandes prononçées contre les usanciers Cahorsins servaient à Constancer les cinq tours du pont Valentré. La race était-



# A Genoux.

Ce livre contient un Prologue et trois parties.

Dans le Prologue est expliqué l'atavisme exceptionnel du personnage et démontrée l'hérédité mystique qui doit se perpétuer en lui.

1<sup>re</sup>

La première partie développe l'enfance, l'éducation dans la solitude, la naissance des idées, l'essor intellectuel, la crise féminine, l'arène de la femme

2<sup>e</sup> partie

L'amour. La mort de la femme aimée. L'extraordinaire douleur causée par cette mort

3<sup>e</sup> partie

Dans ce dernier livre, Ph. Destal s'efforce de ressusciter l'âme de la morte dans sa seconde femme qu'une mystérieuse ressemblance avec la première lui a fait épouser. Il ne réussit pas à opérer cette transfusion et ne peut obtenir qu'une similitude physique sans parvenir à détruire en cette seconde femme, épousée dans ce seul but, une personnalité hostile et qui se révolte contre ces expériences d'évocation et cette persistance du souvenir.

Un hôte survient alors au château. C'est le frère de la première femme. Ph. Destal surprend l'adultère entre sa nouvelle femme et son beau-frère; mais pour la première fois, il entend cette femme s'exprimer dans la passion comme s'exprimait la première et de ce phénomène il lui vient une telle extase qu'il encourage l'adultère pour se réserver ce ravissement.

Cependant le beau-frère disparaît craignant une dangereuse solution. Ph. Destal reproche alors à sa femme de le priver de cette seule consolation que lui donne

la contemplation discrète mais passionnée de l'adultère.

Il arrive à la période d'extrême surexcitation nerveuse. Mais les influences mystiques de son enfance réagissent et, dans une nuit on s'ouvre à ses yeux une angélique vision des mondes futurs où les âmes se rapprochent. Un apaisement se fait en lui et il a accepté d'aimer cette femme qui symbolise l'existence moderne pour mériter plus sûrement la mort qui est l'existence idéale, le retour à l'éternité.

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P3. —

Cette dernière partie sera terminée dans quinze jours au plus tard.

The fourth version of page 1 in the MSS retains the title A Genoux but has the textual changes of the 1892 edition. The rest of this MS., if in fact there was more of it, is missing. Only page one, numbered in red, appears to have survived. The details given here of the extent of the château domain and Guillaume Destal's purchase of it were delayed until Chapter III in the previous MS.

In this fourth version the name of the château has been changed to Morillon, as it is in the 1892 edition. The other authentic place names, Maxou and Saint Pierre La Feuille, situated, like the Château de Roussillon, to the north of Cahors on the road to Souillac, remain unchanged both here and in the 1892 edition.

This version also benefits from a clearer introduction to the story and a simpler and more succinct description of the château. The ponderous first sentence of the second paragraph, with its linguistic novelties, "donjonnant", "écretées", "fenestrés", "pourfendus", has given way to a series of shorter sentences of admirable clarity. The striving for effect of "d'égales hauteurs nivelées", "ajourées de fenêtres basses", "à méfiante ouverture" and "des affaissements de ciels pluvieux" has been forsaken.

Guiches had not abandoned all his stylistic pretensions, however, as the fourth paragraph shows with its "solennité recrépie" and "les cadres immenses qui narguaient gravement et silencieusement leur récente intrusion."

This last version of page one, with its combination of clarity and creative style is representative of the qualities of the 1892 edition in which Guiches is successful in preventing the legacy of creative style which he inherited from Huysmans and the Goncourts from impeding the movement and effectiveness of his story.

Philippe DestalExtracts from Guiches' Notebooks .

Guiches' notebooks, which I found among the writer's papers in 1976 after the death of Mademoiselle Marguerite Guiches, provide clear evidence of extensive reading in preparation for the novel Philippe Destal.

The first page reproduced here, Appendix C(iii), indicates areas of Guiches' research, notably the mystic view of the physical symptoms of saintliness. Here the chief source was La Mystique by Görres, a work well known by Villiers de l'Isle Adam. A.W. Raitt points out (Villiers de L'Isle Adam et Le Mouvement Symboliste, Librairie José Corti, Paris, 1965) that Villiers read the book in 1862 and that it remained one of his favourite books. He liked to talk about mysticism and about the occult, although his knowledge on these subjects was not very deep and he did not make use of them in his works. It seems likely that Guiches, who was very friendly with Villiers, had heard him talk about La Mystique.

The second extract reproduced here, Appendix C(iv), indicates the sources for Guiches' study of intense mental and spiritual sensibility, Gérard de Nerval, Görres, and Ad. Franck. Nerval's poetry and prose, with its frequent preoccupation with a woman whom he has lost and who reappears in another earthly or spiritual identity, may well have been an important source of inspiration for Guiches' novel. The fusion of dream life and reality which characterises Nerval's work also has a bearing on the world of Philippe Destal, whose solitary upbringing and inherited obsession with the independence and power of his own mind lead him to his own ill-fated dreamworld. Nerval, moreover, also believed himself to be a descendant of the Biron family:- "Suis-je Amour ou

nette dont ~~on~~ aux souffles survenus des vitrages mal joints, se randaient par la chambre, des brindilles de jonc. Cette nudité de flâtre et de bois luisant s'adouciait en une odeur pieuse, en une saison de fleurs fanées émanant de roses desséchées signant les feuillets d'un évangélaire et de lavandes évoquant des bénédictions de prairies aux <sup>grandes masses</sup> affluents du soleil et de basilis aspergés aux rosées lustrales des Anges du ~~moitié~~ jour naissant.

Rose posait le bougeoir ~~sur~~ sur une crédence où ~~accrochaient~~ <sup>confiés à ses soins</sup> les burettes d'apparat, ~~confiées à ses soins~~ <sup>de féatilles</sup> émergeaient de reliquaires, de par robis, de cuivres ~~diverses~~ indulgentes et accotaient leur recueil de bases sacrées voilées aux toiles baptismales des manuterges et aux dentelles de taraiolles pour le pain béni.

Nul siège, un simple prie-dieu sur le large accordoir duquel s'étagaient des Heures, des Semaines saintes, des Imitations, le livre des Amos, le moi de la Reine des Saints, le Mois du précieux sang, la vie des saints, la vie de Notre Seigneur Jésus-christ, la cité de Dieu, la Méditation de St Bernard, les sermons de Jean Tauler.

VI. —

Voir notes  
à propos de la  
saint-général  
la saint-général  
l'âme de la saint  
s'écroule à la vue de  
sang. Quel atroce  
obscurantisme!

D'un trait de bras, Rose faisait glisser sur la tringle de fer le rideau blanc fluant à longs plis des hauteurs de la fenêtre. Tous deux se taisaient. Il s'impacientait aux lenteurs de sa femme. Il eut <sup>soignée</sup> des étreintes immédiates, furieusement spontanées, ~~au~~ <sup>le</sup> froid de sanctuaire tombait à frissonnantes ondes sur l'incendie de ses sens. Les regards errants <sup>cherchant le rayon d'un détail sympathique</sup> se heurtaient à des anathèmes d'objets saints et ramassés dans un angle, accorde à la cheminée, <sup>des toiles de pieux symboles, à</sup> ses yeux dardés criaient: « plus vite! plus vite! » à Rose qui se déshabillait sur place avec de calmes gestes, une <sup>grave</sup> placidité d'âme livrant son cadavre à de légitimes, mais stériles manipulations. Elle dégrafait sa pâle quimpe ~~rigide~~ <sup>rigide</sup> d'empois monastique. Des scapulaires <sup>apparaissent</sup> ~~apparaissent~~. Elle dénouait des cordelets qu'elle portait fermement à ses lèvres et prenant, une à une, les épingles qu'elle serrait entre ses den-

elle les ~~tenait~~<sup>offrait</sup> à son mari d'un mouvement ~~convulsif~~<sup>automatique</sup> qui  
 pliait et tendait son ~~bras~~<sup>maigre</sup> bras nu. Les jupes tombaient <sup>à</sup> sur  
 les cendres de la robe grise et s'exhumant des linges et des laines,  
 les ~~sens~~<sup>trépassés</sup> et macérés <sup>en</sup> dans un embaument de camphre,  
 surgissait une nudité, les formes enserrées dans de telles lignes, une  
 innocence primitive troublante sans être troublée, un corps  
 indifférent à lui-même, une chair de pain azyme, ~~ecchymosée~~<sup>meurtrie</sup>,  
~~ecchymosée~~ de pénitences glorifiant, à travers les stigmates de son  
 martyre, l'impassible éclat de sa spirituelle virginité. En lèches de  
 flammes, des spirales tatonnées au rouge sang <sup>montaient</sup> ~~se déroulaient~~<sup>des</sup> aux  
 cuisses piquetées par des pointes de feu, croisaient en une inextricable  
 géographie de torture, la radiation écarlate des plaies récentes et  
 le bleuissement des blessures cicatrisant. Des hanches aux saillies  
 effacées et d'une ~~étroitesse~~<sup>garrotant</sup> étroitesse masculine, la pluie de  
 poudre cuisselait descendait aux chevilles ~~les~~<sup>avec</sup> ~~les~~<sup>lourdes</sup> fines  
 attaches <sup>avec</sup> saignantes en lacets de brodequins. Un  
 plastron de crins bruns écrasait les seins, étranglant la poitrine  
 et ~~bouclant~~<sup>avec</sup> sur la cambrure des reins la compresse barbelée  
 d'épingles et d'orties. Sans une rougeur aux joues, un abaissement  
 des cils, d'âme absente, à jamais incurieuse du corps oublié, Rose  
~~dressait~~<sup>celle</sup> sa nudité dans une ~~imprudence~~<sup>imprudence</sup> et elle  
~~s'offrait~~<sup>se</sup> saintement, avec un sourire ~~luminé~~<sup>luminé</sup> qui  
 disait : « Voici la servante du Seigneur. » Jean la maintenait  
 debout, malgré le froid qui brillait la peau frissonnante.  
 Ses regards étaient exempts de compassion. <sup>Une délectation sanguinaire passionnée,</sup> ~~des~~  
 prunelles au spectacle des chairs suppliciées. Elles se complaisaient  
 en ce rayonnement de carnage. ~~Le~~<sup>Le</sup> césaire de flagellation dont  
 chaque ligne était l'écho d'un ~~hurlement~~<sup>hurlement</sup> multipliait sa  
 jouissance. Les yeux exploraient les sentiers parés de meurtrissures,  
~~auraient~~<sup>auraient</sup> les cornues néandres de cette



Phébus, Lusignan ou Biron?" (El Desdichado, 1854) The name of the Biron family is historically linked with the Château de Roussillon, which provided Guiches with the setting for his novel. In both his verse and his prose Nerval, like Guiches, seemed to connect the vision of the woman he has lost with the medieval château setting: Vide Fantaisie (1832) and Sylvie (1853).

The third extract, Appendix C(v), provides evidence of Guiches' research into the psychology of human love. Much of what he read and planned in his notebook was in fact ultimately rejected and did not reappear in the pages of the surviving manuscript or in the 1892 edition. Among material so discarded was the study of diabolism and obsessive jealousy in Destal. The ideas of Bacon and Claude Vernard, also indicated here, also seem to have been rejected.

The fourth extract takes up the theme of the first. The list of terminology for use in the description of Rose Destal's body, in the Prologue, is a mixture of technical physiology, sensuality and mysticism. The high proportion of abstract nouns here reveals the influence of the Goncourts. The sequel to this study can be found in the pages of the manuscript and in the 1892 edition, where Guiches describes the macerated body of Jean Destal's wife. This extract also contains evidence of the importance Guiches attached to local colour.

Extract number five indicates other sources for the ideas in the novel, notably Heinrich Heine's Lutetia (1854) and Gérard de Nerval's translation of Faust (1828). (Appendix C(vii))

Pages fifteen and sixteen of the long manuscript of L'Autre - later renamed Philippe Destal - give some indication of the use Guiches made of the notes he had entered in his notebook. Whereas, in a comparison between the manuscript of La Bête and the 1887 version of L'Ennemi Guiches could be seen to be adopting many of the Goncourts' stylistic innovations, under the influence of Huysmans, here we can see Guiches



shedding some of the excesses of Naturalism. In the final text, many of the abstract nouns and obscure adjectives and adverbs to be found in the manuscript were omitted.

"les sens trépassés et macérés en un embaumement de camphre", "des anathèmes d'objets saints", "le bleuissement des blessures", "ce rayonnement de carnage", "ce réseau de flagellation dont chaque ligne était l'écho d'un hurlement", all these had disappeared in the 1892 publication.

In addition, Guiches decided against emphasising the more sensational and extreme aspects of his subject. He abandoned, or did not pursue, the idea of his marginal note on page fifteen of the manuscript: "Voir sur les aberrations du sens générique, la cruauté dans l'amour. La bête s'éveillant à la vue de sang. Quel atavisme cela ressuscite-t-il!" The possibilities of exploiting the role of blood in the religious context originally interested him. Guiches subsequently covered up a note written in the top lefthand corner of page sixteen. It repeats a note made in his notebook: "A développer- la théorie du sang, du sang réparateur, expiateur, purificateur, dont l'effusion précipite au néant la matière et émancipe l'esprit. Justification et apologie dans l'Inquisition".

Further indications of this change of mind are deletions of some existing references to blood on Rose Destal's body. "des spirales tatouées au rouge sang", "ses courroies saignantes", "Ils aspiraient le sang, le sommaient d'éventrer les tissus, de jaillir en ses bruines écarlates", "ce sacrifice d'humanité saignante", all these are absent from the 1892 version. On the other hand, the use of colour in the description of Rose Destal's body is retained as is the vocabulary of torture. The general effect of the changes was to simplify the style, without, however, discarding all instances of artistic writing.

APPENDIX CExtracts from Guiches' Notebooks

(i) From Souvenirs Littéraires in Notebook 4.

Two sources of inspiration for the character of Céleste Prudhomat are given in Guiches notes for his memoirs. This extract does not appear in any of the three volumes of his published memoirs.

De toutes ces images se détache et s'offre avec un.... portrait vivant qui me court. C'est une jeune fille d'à peu près mon âge. Elle s'appelle Angéline Loucaret. Son père, maçon, passe ses journées à genoux devant des pierres de taille que sa longue barbe balaie et que son ciseau embellit infatigablement pour des tombes cossues. La mère, sous les madres villageois, a une pauvre figure que la vie semble avoir pressé comme un citron.

Angéline est une jolie fille de taille moyenne mais le buste délicatement jailli de la fine amphore arrondie par les hanches. Sous de lourds cheveux noirs, elle a un visage joli et ardent, des yeux intelligents, humbles et passionnés et une bande écarlate comme le feu d'un géranium dans la tombée du jour.

Les parents ont mis en elle tout leur amour toute leur fierté et aussi tout le maigre argent amassé dans l'éreintement d'une vie de travail forcé et mal nourri. Ils ont voulu qu'elle fût élevée en demoiselle et au chef-lieu aux Dames de la Rosaire elle a reçu pour cela l'instruction et l'éducation qu'il fallait. Elle a son brevet. Elle est institutrice. Comme je la vois! Raisonnable et néanmoins coquette, elle soigne sa toilette, sa diction et son geste. Elle marche la tête droite les coudes au corps, la tournure se tortillant

un peu. Elle ne voit autour d'elle, que les choses et les gens qui en valent la peine. Elle a toujours l'air de se hâter vers un cours, et dans les endroits publics elle a le regard légèrement dédaigneux pour l'ouvrier, indulgent pour le paysan et doux pour le bourgeois.

Angeline me hante. Où est-elle? En quelle sépulcrale et hostile retraite instruit-elle d'indécrottables enfants? En quel drame d'amour doit-elle se débattre? Car elle aime. Mais comme son cœur a, lui aussi, reçu de l'éducation, elle ne peut plus aimer qu'un homme au-dessus de son rang. Et quel homme! Je le vois. Le hobereau sanguin et bon vivant qui ravage les cœurs à travers les campagnes, grand noceur, grand buveur, grand coureur, grand joueur, car devant chaque vice dont le cynisme l'impressionne l'opinion locale met le mot grand aussi bas qu'il puisse être! Angéline est-elle assez forte pour conquérir un mari, ou assez faible pour subir un amant? Elle fait sentir à ce noble comte son infériorité intellectuelle. Il riposte en lui faisant sentir sa supériorité sociale. Ils sont asservis l'un à l'autre par le cœur et les sens, et c'est une passion infernale autour de laquelle tout un village scandalisé gesticule et aboie.

Je suis si imbu de ce roman qu'à un compatriote avec qui je déjeune au restaurant, je le raconte dans les plus émouvants détails. Il m'écoute avec une stupeur croissante et quand j'ai fini:

"Qui diable vous a raconté une pareille histoire?" me dit-il. "C'est abominablement faux d'un bout à l'autre. Angeline Foucaret est une très honnête fille qui n'a ni mari amant et qui vit avec sa mère à Marnières dans l'Ecole où elle obtient les plus beaux succès!"

Je suis abasourdi :

"Pas possible! dis-je. "Elle n'a même pas un  
amant?"

- "Pas le moindre! Vous devez confondre avec Marceline Donnat qui s'était éprise d'un garçon riche et d'excellente famille, fut lâchée comme elle allait avoir un enfant, voulut tuer son amant, le manqua, voulut se tuer, se râta elle-même, se consola avec un autre amant, puis avec un autre, plusieurs autres, devint anarchiste, fit du scandale et alla faire la noce à Toulouse, où ces jours derniers elle a débuté dans un café chantant.

J'écoute. Je ne dis plus un mot. En moi s'amalgament Angéline Foucaret et Marceline Donnat, l'une trop fille, l'autre pas assez femme. Elles ne font plus pour moi qu'une seule femme qui se photographie à ma pensée sous les traits d'Angéline. Je sens revivre en elle toute l'imagination et la sensualité des êtres de chez moi. Je sens se déclencher les impulsions vers la vanité sociale et la réaction dans la souffrance et dans l'humiliation. Je la vois sortir de son humble milieu, joyeuse de s'instruire, enthousiasmée de ses premiers succès, enivrée d'être aimée par l'homme d'un rang social supérieur au sien, qu'elle admire et adore. Je vois son instruction en conflit avec l'ignorance invétérée et aggressive de celui à qui la passion n'a rien à refuser et je vois le drame horrible et final devant le lâchage, la condamnation à la honte, devant l'amour qui rétablit la distance quand il s'agit de mariage, signifiant à la malheureuse qu'en croyant se classer elle n'est arrivée qu'à se déclasser irrémissiblement. En vérité je vis avec

elle. Je suis près d'elle comme un amant inécouté qui regarde rire, s'épanouir aimer et souffrir épouvantablement celle qui l'adore et ne lui laisse que l'amère consolation d'écrire son histoire. Et lorsqu'en tête d'un de ces hauts cahiers de papier quadrillé dont la Compagnie nous comble, j'écris ce nom: 'Céleste Prudhomat', c'est vraiment pour moi un amour qui commence.



- (ii) Second extract from Souvenirs Littéraires in Guiches' Notebooks. Albas and Quercy.

Je ne lis plus que mon journal et je laisse le rêve se substituer en moi à la pensée.

Il me renvoie à mon point de départ, en province, ou plutôt, il me renvoie aux provinces, car, en pleine vie de Paris, il m'installe le vieux décor et toute la vie rétrospective de mon pays natal, les collines qui font le gros dos à mon enfance pour qu'elle grimpe dessus à quatre pattes, la haute falaise au sommet de laquelle les maisons s'enchaînent comme des dents grises, noires, ébréchées et dont l'une d'elles pointe avec un air de protéger les autres, la falaise dont le roc bombe des ventres roses et creuse des profils d'animaux diluviens. Au fond, le Lot se câline et qui, tout à coup, mugit et bave parce qu'un digue l'empêche de passer, l'aviron du batelier qui miroite comme un saut de poisson, une flotille d'oies qui se prélassent, une chèvre qui boit en léchant dans l'eau le reflet de ses lèvres. Un chœur de moissonneurs qui remplit d'amour la vallée, une sombre et puante ruelle qui dégringole, bordée d'échoppes sarrazines où des ressemeurs font sauter sur leurs genoux des souliers grands comme des enfants, des chiens qui se chamaillent des pigeons qui s'aiment, des cochons qu'on égorge, des bourgeois qui flânent, le dos rond, dans un lent va et vient que termine et recommence une lourde pirouette, un omnibus jaune qui se rue en ouragan sur le silence, et autour de la table familiale des satellites de la lampe, ma grand-mère, ma mère, mon père, ma soeur, moi, nos cinq visages couchés sur les assiettes d'où montent des fumées.



A Genou. — Cotes

Mystique des Chateaux de Roussillon. (Prologue)

Voir sur l'odeur de sainteté" (Myst. de Gènes - chaine T. I<sup>er</sup> Page 340)

Elimination de l'Azote (P. 347. Revir tout le ch. Concernant l'odeur et l'huile de sainteté.

l'extérieure pâleur et maigreur de mystiq. de Roussillon la pâleur du visage poussée jusqu'à la lividité dans la tombée du soir. — De la souplesse mystique du corp.

De la clarté du chair poussée jusqu'à la transparence "Doubte" fantôme ressemblant à une personne qui va mourir. Voir son double.

Dit par l'âme les complaisances (P. 420. M. D. T. I<sup>er</sup>) l'entrée dans le Désert (D<sup>er</sup>)

A mesure que l'âme d'apparaît du côté de la terre, elle s'enrichit du côté du ciel. (P. 421. M. D. T. I<sup>er</sup>)

Le Dictionnaire de St. Hildegarde dans le manuscrit, à Wiesbaden. De langage mystique. (M. D. T. I<sup>er</sup>. P. 45)

Jacoponi. — Poésie mystique : "Lectures del beato Jacopone da Todi. — L'édition la plus complète à Venise un fort vol. in 4<sup>to</sup>. (Myst. D. T. I<sup>er</sup>, P. 458)

1590. — Inscript. de la tombe de Jacoponi. — On a beato Jacopone de benedicti, Tiberini, fabris, ordinis Minorum qui stultus propter christum non

des traits. L'œuvre de l'homme patristique de ces jours se fait une honte faite et la s'écroule chute de vertige et s'écroule parait une étonnante décadence

Relier 45 rue Fontaine

Le Catalogue des Princes. Voir l'édifice typique l'édifice du 1<sup>er</sup> volume Page 253

5 ans Coustes et des gens

Alfred Guichet. P. 100 - 105 - avant.

Gravure de la queue du Cheval et l'union du Commun fortibidone

A de vertigineuses hauteurs, un tiercelet escapé du poing de l'homme etc ..... pour l'âme

du totem de monitrice, → D<sup>er</sup>

la Halle aux Conscience

Gravures 1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>es</sup> de la

pour l'âme

1<sup>re</sup> Helvie. Page 341 Ch. XIX. Myst. naturelle  
le page ayant trait aux Bases de la Myst. diabolique.

Relire dans les [Illuminés] de Géraud de Nerval. - Page 255  
le passage sur l'héliotrope [Quintus Ancler]

La nature et un esprit, l'esprit de l'univers  
dont la matière et les éléments sont le corps

St. Martin. Discours sur la nature de l'homme

Ad. Franck. P. 154 Phil. myst. et France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle

L'homme, dans son état d'innocence, se suffisait à lui-même comme son  
créateur; toutes les facultés qui appartiennent à sa nature étaient  
renfermées en lui d'une manière indivisible; - il pouvait se reproduire  
ou se régénérer lui-même par la seule contemplation de son divin modèle.  
Il était un hermaphrodite spirituel. Sa faiblesse lui valait d'être divisé en  
deux moitiés, qui se distinguent, non seulement par leur enveloppe extérieure,  
mais par les dispositions de leur âme, par les dons de leur esprit, et  
dont la faiblesse ne peut trouver de remède que dans le mariage, parce que  
le mariage ramène à sa véritable destination, à leur but de redresser  
la nature humaine en réunissant les facultés réparties entre les deux sexes,  
l'intelligence et l'admiration étant surtout le partage de l'homme,  
l'adoration et l'amour celui de la femme

"Toute la nature n'est qu'une douleur concentrée"  
St. Martin de P. 163.

St. P. 160

.. A Genou. - 1<sup>re</sup> Partie. -

Philippe Destal. Notes psychologiques.

Le dégoût inné ou plutôt la fatigue de soi,  
de sa propre sensation toujours butée aux mêmes  
objets, aux mêmes visages, la lassitude de sa propre  
pensée qui jamais n'apportait à son esprit de l'inattendu  
(à ajouter, en développant, à ce qui est déjà fait)

L'éducation de silence et de solitude décuplait en lui  
l'intensité des impressions. Elles s'enfonçaient....

Les pensées marchaient solitaires dans son  
cerveau

Il considérait la Métempsychose  
comme un état de retraite accordé aux êtres  
pour se reposer d'avoir été des hommes

« A la place de la fameuse proposition de Malebranche  
« nous voyons tout en Dieu », St. Martin voudrait qu'on  
lit : « nous voyons Dieu en tout » - Si les êtres que  
nous apercevons aujourd'hui dans la nature, sous les  
attributs de la matière ont déjà existé avant leur  
corporelisation, il est évident que les corps ne sont  
qu'une forme inférieure, qu'une contraction de la  
substance universelle. En effet la matière n'a





## Notes descriptives. Scènes principales

Entre Rose Destal & son mari

Elle semblait exhumée de ses vêtements. - Reliquaire à adapter allégoriq<sup>te</sup> à une partie du corps. Expression des formes. Effacement des lignes. Eclat révélant la troublante innocence primitive. Clarté de la chair jusqu'à la transparence. La peau n'est plus qu'une gaze à travers laquelle apparaît l'osature, une tunique. Air. Le V, ventre en bouclier.

Articulations	{ ankylose, articulaire, é, attaches, emboîté, charnière, désarticulé, capsule synoviale, poche, rotule, noyau du genou.
Bras	aisselle, courbure extér. du coude, av. bras, veine basilique ou du bras, muscle extenseur du bras, coude, cubital qui se rapp. au coude, cubitus, os de l'av. bras, gousset de l'aisselle, huméral, humérus, os depuis l'épaule jusqu'au coude, poignet, saignée pli du bras opposé au coude.
Chair	carnation, carni, charnalité ou sensualisme, charnure, décharner, couper la chair au vif, décharner, etc.
Cheveux	artificiels, capillaire, filant, pâles, éteints, mèches grises, fils de la vieillesse.
Col	Col. collaire, encolure, onduleux
Derrière	Croupe de garçon à saillies brèves
Doigts	annulaire, arachnéens, digital, tation, té, tulle, doigte, ter, fusella, muscles lombicaux qui font mouvoir les doigts, face palmaire qui corresp <sup>d</sup> à la paume de la main.
Dos	saillie anguleuse, dorsal, lombaire, vertébral, hé, brer
Épaules	éminence supér. de l'omopl. clavicule, aiso, d. crête de l'omopl. fossa, d'ombre, cavités.
forme	apparence, conformation, configuration, construction, modelage, structure

pendante et mystérieuse comme d'un  
voile spirituel. — Les étoiles illuminent  
de lantains fous de bivoires. — des magis  
roses de l'aurore. — le goût de l'air, les  
souffles apportant à l'âme en s'invisibles et  
exacts pollen, des tourments d'imposée nature  
etc. .... la factotum de lumière qui régit les étoiles. —  
Pleur de ..... [pielle expression] — se gâter d'im  
enfant... [expression moyen-âge pour désigner une femme  
enrêlée]. — "Vq' allons pas outre" [cri des anciens  
chevaliers, lorsqu'ils se trouvaient en présence d'un  
dangereux miniatel]. — Les paroles se caressaient  
les unes les autres sur des lèvres. — Outre de là et  
avant [Exp. moyen-âge p/ dorénavant] Environ  
Vêpres [D.]. — Esprit volatile. — L'oubliance [ex. mot]  
La supériorité. — Un ciel marquée. — Un  
visage doré par le soleil. — Aux horizons, des fumées  
de chaux, élevaient au ciel les piques du soir. —  
des fleurs invisibles. — L'arc de grâce et de  
consolation [cette phrase est de Klopstock dans le poème les  
Constellations]. — Je me mis à l'aimer de tout mon  
force et à servir muette afin de faire tenir une année  
dans ~~un~~ jour. — [Jean-Louis Richter]. — Une  
pousière scolastique. [D.] — De là, votre entretien prit ce

à ciel charmant de l'air. — Un regard de  
jongleur. — des fleurs et les plantes dont le  
parfum eut suffi pour le faire vivre éternellement.  
— Des Coteaux tranchants. — Un collier  
factice. — les grâces, des neiges rotantes. —  
Une peau gommée [par Rose Destal]. — des  
Cochons en salades de pomme, de brebis. —  
Colombier les jours, les nuits etc. —  
Jours aleyoniens. — Jours de claque. —  
de l'âme en l'air de des lumières idéales. —  
Les faibles conceptions des jours d'automne. —  
le vent qu'on voit dans les nuits autour du chateau,  
(à dévoter un peu) sortait des nuées comme un huchement de  
prophète. — des nuées noires de la nuit, tout blanc  
rose de la journée naissante. — des gongolans (ou l'âme, à  
vendre). — Des étoiles filantes en trait de leur diamant  
cachaient les vides du ciel. — Une ammoniation  
d'amour. — Le soleil traquait par le stigmate du  
couchant. — La bouche itrophage des grâces. —  
Donner l'invisibilité aux yeux, des brèves confidentielles,  
(bon ou mauvais conseil). — Une âme rapée. —  
Les formes des nuages restituant les formes des  
monstres océaniques pompés par l'air [Richter faire]. —  
Il se servait pour penser d'une symbolique

Mystique Diabolique.

Voit p: l' Evocation la Préface de la 2<sup>e</sup> édition  
(Faust) Traduction de Géraud de Nerval. Pages 16 & 17

« Les ombres qui se meuvent gravement en  
«ruminant» leur vie passée..... [di:] 18

Sur la propriété humaine: si tu possèdes des châteaux,  
Leurs forces ne sont-elles pas les tiennes? (di:) P. 77.  
Et les sens?

Je sens au fond de mon être, une voix qui me dit  
que je suis d'un pays où il n'y a pas de femmes  
Saint-Martin (Portrait historique).

Nous ne pouvons avoir qq. confiance en nos doctrines  
qu'autant que nous avons mis notre espoir en jansénisme dans  
les Ecritures saintes (di:) (di:)

Je me crois obligé de dire à ceux qui liront excellente que  
l'homme peut avancer infiniment dans la carrière des études  
vives spirituelles et même atteindre à un rang élevé parmi les  
maîtres de la science sans voir les écueils? (Minist. de l'homme-éprit)  
p. 43

L'hypothèse d'une origine divine pour cet état d'âme et non pour  
par crainte du danger (Chap. de l'Amour). — L'hémaphrodite  
de la nature. Les rochers, séparés par les cataclysmes de la sécheresse  
l'homme séparé de la femme par la chute première et ramené  
à l'hémaphrodisme primitif par le mariage. — Les  
journées mettaient leurs allonges de lumière. — Comme  
les vagues se rompaient dans le clair de lune. —

Dans la nuit le profond silence des chœurs sur le port des larmes.  
Une beauté fatale. — Voir dans l'Intérieur H. Heine P. 255.

L'Angleterre, le grand serpent d'eau (H. Heine 8<sup>e</sup> 260). —  
Philippe avait la conséquence des choses. C'est pourquoi il  
n'agissait pas. — Voir à ce sujet (H. Heine 8<sup>e</sup> 280). —

A développer la théorie du Sang réparateur, expiatoire purificateur dont  
l'effusion précipite au néant la matière et émanche l'esprit. Justification  
et apologie de l'Inquisition. Rose lui apparaissait dans cette mortuaire  
pâleur des chapelles, espagnoles. — l'idée fixe. l'idée monothéiste. —

Sira-Roudra s'asseyant, solitaire, sur le dragon qui a dévoré  
les mondes. — Cheminer l'horizon. — la lecture communie

des jours. — La figure avait le majesté des traits de l'homme. — Comme  
ce paysage nous va bien! — Un peu de brouillard et le positivisme de  
la pierre disparaît et les châteaux du rêve s'effacent. — Une porte  
d'hôtel qui s'ouvre avec facilité et discrétion. — Une figure

zodiacale. — Dans l'ambiance d'un brouillard, dans l'engourdissement d'une  
brume en laquelle sautent les molécules du rêve, architecturer une face palatiale  
— Sa timidité rendait sa voix sourde. — Les créations n'ont de beauté que  
celle que nous leur donnons. — Et alors le se yeux.



Les Hébreux d'aujourd'hui  
à l'origine de l'écriture  
avec des signes d'origine  
à une écriture d'homme  
placés à la suite des  
palais d'origine

Les courants de l'écriture  
dans le monde pour  
l'univers, la écriture  
adventant de Phénicie  
l'écriture de l'écriture  
l'écriture de l'écriture  
l'écriture de l'écriture

Villes aux maisons  
de l'écriture  
Les chars de fer  
des hébreux

Les autres de  
l'écriture  
Les maisons  
de l'écriture

Les émanations  
des lettres de  
l'écriture arrivent  
jusqu'à l'écriture

Le vent d'est, le  
Sud, l'écriture, l'écriture  
qui l'écriture l'écriture  
l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

La plaine de l'écriture  
si fertile qu'au temps  
de la maison d'écriture  
à l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

Les femmes de  
l'écriture avaient  
l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

de parfums depuis  
Beth-Hay-Schinnat  
jusqu'à l'écriture l'écriture

Les térébinthes  
de l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

Gâteaux de l'écriture  
de l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

Le Diable s'élève à la  
tête de l'homme

## Les sources

## Le Jourdain (P'harder)

En un cirque de collines plantées de chênes  
verts, à d'élèves nait le Jourdain. D'une grande  
situation au pied d'une énorme muraille de rochers  
tout le fleuve s'écoule.

### 3 sources le forment

- le Nahr-Hazbaya
- le Nahr-Leddan
- le Nahr-Hazbani

Le Jourdain commence à couler sous les  
platanes & les lauriers; il s'attarde ensuite  
dans les marais de l'ard-el-Huleh, forme le  
lac de Merom et traverse celui de Kinnereth  
après le Hazbani et l'ard-el-Huleh.

La toute des bords  
dans le pays des  
Phéniciens. Rejoignant

Chant de Salomon  
P. 338.

Les vins d'Enguedi  
& de Hebron

Les poudres, les  
parmentiers, on se  
métrait les cailloux

Les Jépreux - Le S  
Concernant les Jépreux  
Jépreux rencontrés nom  
de la ville. Sacrifice  
expiatorie Page 172  
Hist. d'Israel. Ledrain

### Les ans

Parfums. - La Myrrhe, l'aloë  
et le cinname

## LA MER MORTE (Mer Jāmhamel)

d'après les écrivains grecs Lac Asphaltite

le pays est divisé en deux au midi

en 3 zones

au milieu le lac les montagnes:  
la Montagne d'Asphaltite qui commence dans la  
plaine & se dirige à l'est jusqu'à l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

Les groupes du sud l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture  
l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

la cote de l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

la cote de l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

la cote de l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

Les acacias immortels

Sedom & Zor (Sagar) seient à l'extrémité S.O. de  
la Mer-Salée. Quant à Gomorre, il semble qu'on doive  
rapprocher son nom de celui de Gommere que les  
Arabes donnent à l'un des 3 enclos monicaux de  
l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture l'écriture

Malgré les curieuses analogies entre les noms  
des cites dévotées et les notes rapportant sur les cures du  
lac Asphaltite, il est sans doute inutile de chercher les  
lacs de Sedom & de Zor dans les noms des monicaux  
croyant, qui bordent le lac. Ils sont sans doute  
engloutis.

E. Ledrain. Hist. d'Israel  
1<sup>re</sup> Partie

L'air en cette région est d'une  
telle transparence, qu'à des distances considérables  
on aperçoit les montagnes & les maisons.

Id...

Chaque et différenciés Et enfin



Achaler	(se presser. Il se précipitait vers la ville)	Agral	(proverbiale)
abriter	(habitation)	Agriver	(venir)
abolir	(qui abolit)	Adduire	(conduire vers)
abouffé	(essoufflé)	Adémurer	(S'adémurer de désespoir)
abridier	(attacher avec la bride)	Adoignance	inherence
abruiser	(abruiser)	Adjurance	
absconnement	(cachette)	Admirance	
absolt	(absolu)	Adouloir (S'ad)	
acerner	(manacrer)	Adonction	(protection)
aconuoir	(rendre lâche)	S'apflaquir	(devenir flasque p/ accablé)
Acoustumance		Agenti (S'a)	(embelle)
Acueillance		Aggruper	(pillard)
Acerber	(aigrir)	Agole	(bordé au collet, richement agole de femme)
Acertance	(assurance)	Agacrier	(rendre gracieux)
Acertes	(certes)	Agailir	(80 grêle)
Aclergir	(rendre vivant)	Agrei	(armement de chevalier)
Acrolade		Agrenir	(brûlé du feu)
Aconvoijé	(aconvoijé de processions)	Ahaner	(S'ahaner l'esprit)
Aconubi	(tout aconubi, tout courbé, courbé)	Ajourner	(rajourner)
Aconruir		Alangone (S'a)	(devenir languissant)
Acortine	(une, pour le char du Seigneur)	Allable	(qui peut aller)
Aconstremment		Allegance	
Acresté (er)	(fier)	Allumailles	(flambeaux, brûlons)
Acter	(dresser les actes p/ le notaire de Ph. le Bel)	Amener	(rendre menu)

"Grand Journal" Contes à public du 6 au 28 Février 1896

- 1 - Le jeune homme au long d'œil pénétrant (G. Guiches) Jeudi 6 Fév. 96 X
- 2 - Brûlante (Beaubourg) Vendredi 7 Fév. X
- 3 - La Convalescente (G. Mourey) Samedi 8 Fév. X
- 4 - Le Hauté (J. Case) Dimanche 9 Fév. X
- 5 - Les Éléphants (J. Madeline) Lundi 10 Fév.
- 6 - St Evoline - L'impératrice Eugénie - Mardi 11 Fév.  
Symp. allégresse considérable d'écouter le piano (H. Kist)
- 7 - ~~Le Hauté~~ - (J. Madeline) Mercredi 12 Fév.
- 8 - Dute - tombe (Eug. Delard) Jeudi 13 Fév.
- 9 - (J. Madeline) Vendredi 14 Fév.
- 10 - (Julien Renard) Samedi 15 Fév.
- 11 - (Ch. Buet) Dimanche 16
- 12 - (Ad. Frieres) Lundi 17
- 13 - (Julien Case) Mardi 18
- 14 - (G. Guiches) Mercredi 19
- 15 - St Evoline - Reine d'Italie. - Jeudi 20 Fév.
- 16 - (J. Madeline) Vendredi 21
- 17 - (G. Mourey) Samedi 22
- 18 - (Beaubourg) Dimanche 23
- 19 - (H. Kist) Lundi 24
- 20 - (Julien Renard) Mardi 25
- 21 - (E. Delard) Mercredi 26
- 22 - St Evoline Jeudi 27
- 23 - (G. Mourey) Vendredi 28
- 24 - Samedi 29

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au Chateau de Wincindol, le maître rassemblant les  
domestiques dans la chapelle du Chateau et leur faisant  
chanter les Cantiques du mariage de Marie.

À faire.

1<sup>re</sup> - Vie parisienne. - (des Contradictions amoureuses)  
2<sup>e</sup> - Le Gaulois (Etude de la vieille aristocratie de province)  
3<sup>e</sup> - Nouvelle Revue. (Humoristes et écrivains contemporains)  
4<sup>e</sup> - Une Nouvelle p/le Temps

Revue Bléue

Illustration.

— Vie parisienne. —

1<sup>re</sup> - Une femme a abandonné son mari qui la voulait. Elle a  
qui avec son ancien jeune homme d'abord, charmant,  
impitoyablement distingué qui s'adore. Elle lui déclare qu'elle  
s'est trompée, qu'elle ne l'aime pas et qu'elle veut retourner  
auprès de son mari (ayant peut-être la nostalgie de la relecture)

2<sup>e</sup> - Une jeune fille s'éprend d'un poète - à la lecture  
de ses œuvres. Elle veut l'épouser. Elle est mise en rapport  
avec lui et le trouve si différent de son œuvre qu'elle s'enquit  
épouvantée.

3<sup>e</sup> - L'homme qui adore sa femme, mais se fait  
coquetter p/avoir la venue au jeu.

4<sup>e</sup> - La femme à l'empereur qui perd son avant  
pour ne pas fatiguer son mari (écrit)

5<sup>e</sup> - La femme qui arrange la table de son avant,  
la finit en faveur et lui déclare avec admiration qu'il  
accueille à son domestique.

## Chroniques pour Gil Blas

- X Mécanisme d'un Commerceant (le trait des mémoires d. 14p)
- X Le lotu par supposition (le thème en jeu)
- X La femme qui hille son mari défunt et a pour qu'il ne soit pas mort (une abéc)
- X Escadelle d'un amoureux (l'histoire de 13<sup>es</sup> avec la réécriture de 1<sup>er</sup>)
- X Trait de bonté d'un littéraire.
- X Un jeune (soit curi de physiologie)  
(le 1<sup>er</sup> à la prison 12<sup>es</sup>, 12<sup>es</sup> 12<sup>es</sup>)
- X X L'écrit de la femme et son ami en flagrant délit. L'écrit d'un ami  
après la première confession. L'écrit à X pour le 1<sup>er</sup> et le 2<sup>es</sup> à l'insistance de  
la femme. ~~qui ne peut pas être importable et sans chance X proteste~~ la  
méchanceté d'engager dans ce sens. ~~1<sup>er</sup> 1<sup>er</sup> 1<sup>er</sup> de coucher avec une femme~~  
et pour la délinqu. On n'est pas plus indolent.

## Sujet de pièce

Titre : Déclassé, déclassé,

X Jeune homme de famille distinguée s'éprend d'une jeune fille  
vivante dans un milieu inclassable juif, casta, bohème. N'ayant d'amour et  
était jeune, il n'a pas réfléchi. Il prend bientôt en horreur le monde dans lequel il  
vit. L'autre lui est formé à cause de l'anti-bourgeoisisme de sa femme. Cette autre  
la passion pour sa femme de qui il est d'ailleurs ordinairement aimé et son désir  
d'une autre vie, la conscience d'être déclassé... Milieu curieux, types  
d'agénétiques à étudier. — Types de déclassés, professeurs, instituteurs, prêtres, hommes  
à systèmes etc...

## Sujets de films.

L'Association. — X & L. se sont mariés sans amour et ont  
out pour une association d'intérêt pour leur bien-être  
monde. Le mari fait à la femme la <sup>confiance</sup> ~~confiance~~ qu'il est  
amoureux et il revient, de ce qu'elle n'est pas jalouse, et  
mais au contraire le félicite et l'encourage une  
cohabitation qu'on juge au sujet. Elle lui apprend, à son  
tour, même chose. Il lui fait des observations lui-même  
que ce qui n'a pas d'importance <sup>pour</sup> lui, en a la plus  
grande pour elle, enfin la observation dans laquelle  
s'épanouissent la fétidité ordinaire du mari, le dégoût  
de l'homme etc... de... Le conflit les mène à l'annulation  
(à l'étude, développer pour un acte, 2 acts ou 3 tableaux)

## Theatre

- Il est très obligé. Il sert tous ses amis.
- Qui... il les sert au contraire.

Le mari se fait la fortune dans la magistrature,  
celui-ci dans l'intendance militaire, et autre dans le  
ministère des finances, celui-ci dans le doct.

C'est plein de juifs. On en sort écariné, le nez sur les lèvres.

## Théâtre.

Sujet. - 1 homme à femmes. Acte la Conquête.  
 1 homme qui n'aime pas, mais qui n'obtient qu'à  
 l'instinct de lutte et de triomphe, se fait aimer  
 et quand la femme se donne à lui a fini la  
 dom. seure et est la de la Conquête. Elle  
 s'attache à lui, se veut. Lettre des 2 volants

## Corrections dans "Snob"

Supprimer les "à peu près", trop d'effets de liquides et  
 cigares, trop de compliments sur l'esprit,  
 abréger la scène à 3 (fin du par acte, discussion sur  
 les snobs)

(Sc. de la Duchesse et de Sargy acte 1-15) faire  
 liaison entre le Duc et Hélène. La Lettre n'indique,  
 par le récit d'une soirée oubliée, qu'une entrevue  
 rue Lincoln. Corser la scène entre Sargy et la  
 femme qui use la faute et qui s'approche à Sargy  
 ne l'avoir pas assez aimée pour la répandre.  
 de mieux la scène de Tuilleries avec Hélène et celle  
 rue, de nouveau la faute avec les "Monsieur  
 Croquet, vous ?" etc....

Acte IV Corser la conversation d'Hélène et de  
 Sargy, abréger le portrait et tout le rôle de Monteford,  
 appuyer sur la confession indirecte à la fin de la scène  
 Sargy - Monteford.

Les habits à corser de façon plus forte au  
 mariage du Duc et d'Bléau. L'homme qui répand les  
 nouvelles surdaines (l'informe). L'homme dans le don  
 qui se croit aux buffets chers.



(1)









(ii)

This letter was quoted by Antoine in Mes Souvenirs Littéraires sur le Théâtre Libre (Entry for 27 mars 1888) drafted by the signatories to the Manifeste for communication to the Press. Published in Le Figaro, 23 March 1888.

Monsieur le Rédacteur,

Avec une rancune et des habiletés indignes de son grand talent comme de sa haute situation littéraire M. Emile Zola signale la réunion de nos quatre noms sur l'affiche du Théâtre Libre ce soir en y attribuant un caractère de nouvelle manifestation contre le Naturalisme dont il est et reste le grand pontif. Cependant les notes parues dans les journaux étaient bien précises. Il y était dit, et nous l'affirmons de nouveau, que nos trois oeuvres sont dissemblables, issues d'initiatives isolées, que leur apparition simultanée ne signifie ni entente préalable ni théorie commune. L'absence du cinquième protestataire, notre ami Rosny, et l'addition d'un nouveau nom, celui de Henri Lavedan, suffirait à le démontrer. M. Emile Zola se trompe encore en parlant d'un art nouveau et que ridiculement nous prétendrions apporter au théâtre. Il n'était pas en effet question de théâtre dans notre manifeste et nous ne pouvions enfin attaquer M. Emile Zola, romancier, sachant trop quelles discrètes condoléances on doit à l'auteur de Bouton de Rose et de René.

Signé

Paul Bonnetain, Lucien Descaves

Paul Margueritte et Gustave Guiches

(iii)

Unpublished notes by Guiches three years after the appearance of Le Manifeste des Cinq

Il y a près de trois ans, au moment où venait de paraître la Terre de M. Emile Zola, cinq jeunes littérateurs protestaient, au nom de leur admiration passée, contre ce qui dénonçait, - d'ailleurs aux yeux de tous, - dans les œuvres nouvelles de l'écrivain, un démenti formel à son programme et signifiait, vis-à-vis de lui-même, une éclatante défection.

Ils ne proclamaient pas un "schisme", comme on l'a dit. Nullement solidaires, nullement enrégimentés dans le naturalisme, différents les uns des autres, gardant chacun l'indépendance absolue de sa pensée, unis seulement par une réciprocité d'estime intellectuelle, les cinq s'étaient rencontrés dans l'expression d'un même sentiment.

Peut-être quelques-uns des termes dont ils se servirent justifiaient-ils, par une pompe excessive d'indignation, les railleries nombreuses qu'on crut devoir leur décerner. Toutefois le lyrisme de cette manifestation ne dépassait pas celui qu'employait M. Zola lorsqu'il attaquait la glorieuse dictature de Victor Hugo, et qu'interpellant le poète, il le sommait de descendre de son siècle, ainsi que dans certains refrains, on invite familièrement Henri IV à "descendre de son cheval". M. Zola invectivait Victor Hugo. Les cinq jugeaient respectueusement l'auteur de l'Assommoir et cet acte de critique n'excédait point, on en conviendra, le droit strict du plus humble des lecteurs. Il serait et effet déraisonnable d'exiger, pour les artistes parvenus à un imposant degré de célébrité,

l'institution d'une haute cour de justice, une juridiction des pairs qui, seule, pourrait prononcer sur leurs œuvres des verdicts définitifs. Encore pour<sup>1</sup>rait-on réclamer avec plus d'équité cette mesure d'exception en faveur de quelques cerveaux rares, indifférents à l'admiration publique, spécialisés dans un art inaccessible à la masse et ne souhaitant que l'enthousiasme faiblement tumultueux des esprits de choix.

Mais M. Zola est un écrivain démocratique. Il s'est déclaré lui-même justiciable du suffrage universel et, par ce fait, a pleinement absous de témérité quiconque s'aventurerait à formuler sur ses livres une consciencieuse opinion. Un article relevant les défaillances de sa littérature, - cet article provint-il d'un syndicat de jeunesse, - ne constituait donc pas une présomption démesurée. D'ailleurs si les signataires de ce prétendu manifeste étaient assimilable à des py<sup>g</sup>mées dressés contre un Titan, (cette comparaison leur fut assez fréquemment infligée), n'eût-il pas été logique de réduire, par la même occasion, l'inventeur des Rougon-Macquart à l'invisibilité d'une atome à côté du géant des Misérables, de L'Homme qui rit et des Travailleurs de la Mer?

Mais ceci n'est certes pas une récrimination et si j'exhume d'un passé de trois ans un document à peu près oublié, c'est peut-être qu'il n'est pas sans intérêt aujourd'hui de rechercher jusqu'à quel point les prévisions qu'il contenait se sont réalisées. L'article signalait une déviation prochaine, un nouvel "aiguillage" dans la vie littéraire et dans l'œuvre de M. Zola.

Or, depuis cette époque, le chef du naturalisme a publié trois romans. Le Rêve équivalait, par son seul titre, à une abjuration officielle de la doctrine professée jusqu'alors. On connaît le livre. C'est une compilation de la Légende dorée, une tentative de mysticisme, une vulgarisation d'idéal destinée à conquérir les suffrages d'un public scandalisé par la brutale puissance des ouvrages précédents.

Le Vœu d'une morte est passé presque inaperçu. Son caractère rétrospectif le dispensait sans doute de tout retentissement. Mais, pas plus que Le Rêve, il n'était de nature à démentir la prédiction du dit manifeste. Un roman pseudo-mystique, un autre romantique, c'était plus qu'il n'en fallait. Deux attentats consécutifs au dogme naturaliste!... M. Zola décidément perdait l'esprit de famille des Rougon-Macquart.

La Bête Humaine a paru ces jours derniers. L'œuvre était annoncée comme devant être une étude des Chemins de fer. Elle aboutit à un roman d'aventures ensanglanté d'assassinats que déterminent des phénomènes d'hérédité bien connus et qu'il est injuste, semble-t-il, d'attribuer spécialement au personnel des voies ferrées. Les chemins de fer sont bien indiqués et l'on n'ignore pas que M. Zola a parcouru de nombreux kilomètres sur la plate-forme d'une locomotive de la Compagnie de l'Ouest. Cependant il n'est guère admissible qu'il ait rapporté de son voyage documentaire la vision réelle d'un mécanicien et d'un chauffeur pris de querelle et luttant jusqu'à s'exterminer à la tête d'un train qui "roule...roule...dans la nuit noire, on ne sait où."

En décrétant le naturalisme, M. Zola s'était interdit formellement les hyperboles du romantisme aussi bien que les fantaisies de l'imagination. Dans ce livre, comme dans ceux qui l'ont devancé, le milieu décrit manque d'âme. Seules, ses dépendances matérielles sont créées au microscope, leurs proportions grandies jusqu'à l'invraisemblable par un maître décorateur. Mais les personnages qui s'agitent dans ces cadres hypothétiques n'offrent que de banales surfaces d'humanité. Pas une phrase qui descende dans les profondeurs vives de leur être. Pas un mot qui fasse jaillir l'être intime. L'influence du milieu sur eux et leur réciproque influence sur le milieu ne ressortent par aucun trait distinctif. En quoi ces ouvriers des chemins de fer diffèrent-ils des ouvriers zingueurs, des maçons ou des charpentiers?

Les aventures sanguinaires qui dramatisent le livre sont provoquées par l'atavisme despotique de l'assassinat. Les personnages, ou plutôt les héros de la Bête Humaine, tuent parce que leurs ancêtres ont tué. L'explication est simple. Grâce à cette importation d'une loi pathologique promulguée par M. Lombroso, mais que lui du moins étudie, tout travail d'analyse se trouve radicalement supprimé. Il ne reste plus que la "hautaine leçon des faits", selon l'expression même de M. Zola. Mais cette leçon, aussi bien que l'épithète qui sert à l'ennoblir, est des plus contestables, si l'on ne développe la participation morale de l'individu à l'accomplissement des faits, et l'exposé brutal d'une action dramatique, - cette action fût-elle rehaussée de littérature, - ne pourra jamais satisfaire que la clientèle des romans feuilletons.

Encore dans la Terre, les personnages étaient-ils mieux expliqués. Ils se présentaient d'ailleurs dans la simplicité d'êtres de nature, dénués de complication.

## GUSTAVE GUICHES

## REMINISCENCE

Nous avions tous les deux passé notre soirée  
Loin des yeux, à l'écart. Et la main dans la main  
Tu n'avais que seize ans, moi j'étais collégien  
Je sentais ma jeune âme à tes regards brûlée  
Dès lors, je ne vis plus que toi dans ma pensée  
Et des rêves charmants mon sommeil était plein  
Quand la cloche frappait sur son timbre argentin  
Je croyais écourter la parole adorée  
Un jour sur mon cahier, j'étais penché rêveur  
Suivant d'un air distrait la voix du professeur  
Qui dictait gravement une version latine  
Et ce maudit bourreau qui me voyait rêver  
Vint près de moi s'asseoir et vit sur mon papier  
Ecrit plus de cent fois ce mot.....Valentine!

I am grateful to Madame Denise Lambert (née Goureau), the daughter of M. Jean Pagès for the text of this early poem by Guiches. (date unknown)



## v.

An extract from pages on the death of his sister, written in 1881.

Il y a eu dix-huit ans en Février dernier que ma petite sœur Marie âgée de onze ans partit pour le ciel. - J'avais trois ans, je pleurnichais sans trop savoir pourquoi, parce que sans doute, je voyais pleurer ma mère et je me souviens que j'accusais de ce malheur les braves religieuses que j'avais vu prier au chevet du lit. On ne fit guère attention à moi ce jour-là. - Chacun pleurait et regardais pleurer ne comprenant pas très bien la cause de ces larmes et trouvant tout naturel que ma petite sœur s'en fut en robe blanche voir ses petites camarades du Paradis. Cependant j'étais ému: j'avais comme un vague instinct du "Plus jamais" et j'étais triste autant de la tristesse des autres que de la part instinctive que je prenais au deuil de mes parents.

Oh! je me souviens très bien. - A dix-huit ans de distance je peux analyser mes impressions d'enfant avec autant de sûreté que si je les éprouvais à l'heure actuelle. - Les plus légères circonstances se dessinent nettement dans mon esprit et ces souvenirs douloureux me reviennent parfois au milieu de la vie pratique avec une poignante intensité.

Je me souviens de la sépulture - à la ville la sépulture est grandiose, la solennité des voix, le ronflement des orgues, les sanglots déchirants de la harpe vous font passer à fleur de peau le frisson des grandes choses.

Au village, la sépulture est touchante. L'Eglise était triste et grise, le catafalque était dressé au milieu, les jeunes filles étaient vêtues de blanc. La voix des chantres chevrotante et inculte vibrait avec ce déchirement profond que sait prendre la voix primitive du laboureur....

(vi)

Details of Guiches' passport dated 14th February 1921

Passeport valable pour 1 an, 14 février 1921.

Délivré à Gustave Guiches, Alexis Antoine Paul,  
Homme de lettres, natif d'Albas dans le Lot le 18  
juin 1860 demeurant à Paris, 104 rue d'Amsterdam.

Signalement - Age 60 ans, taille 1 mètre 68, cheveux  
blancs, front découvert, yeux bleus, nez ordinaire,  
bouche mince, sans barbe, menton rond, visage ovale,  
teint ordinaire, signes particuliers - aucun.

# LES DEUX SOLDATS

adaptation du roman

de Gustave GUICHES

par

Jean HERVÉ

de la

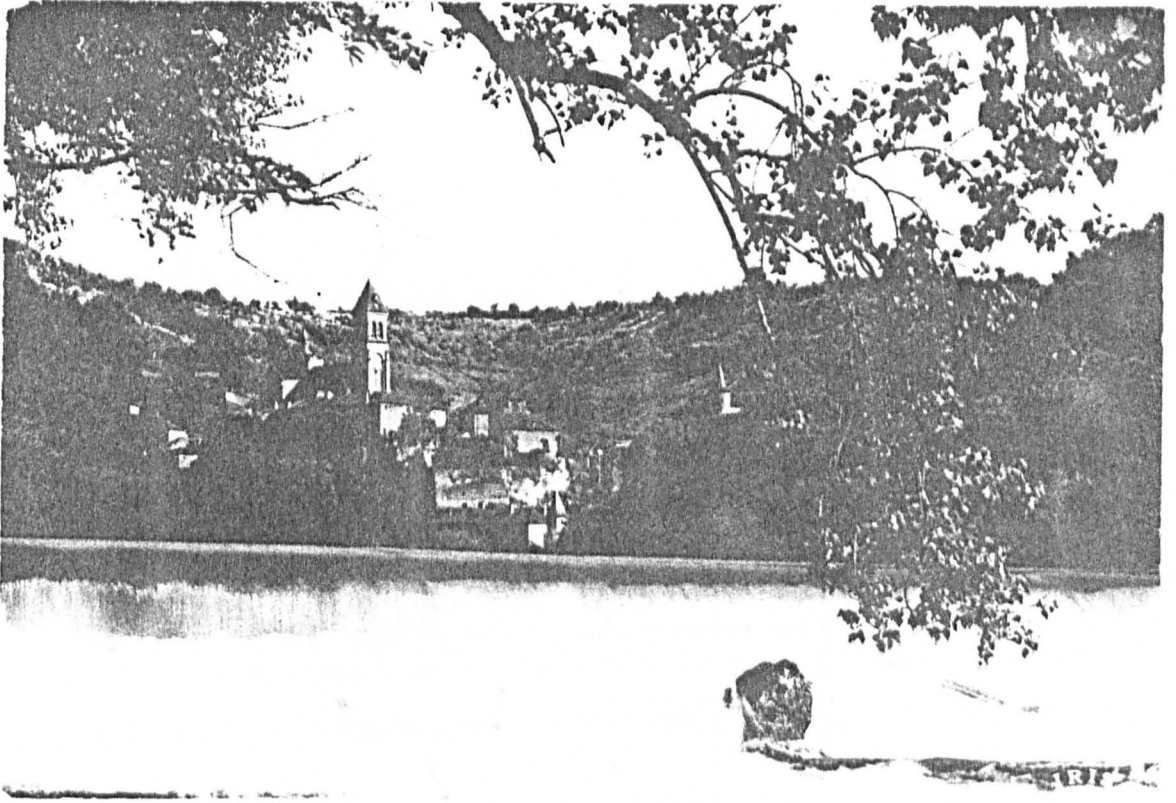
Comédie Française



AGENCE GÉNÉRALE  
CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE

(vii) The film version of Les Deux Soldats

(viii)

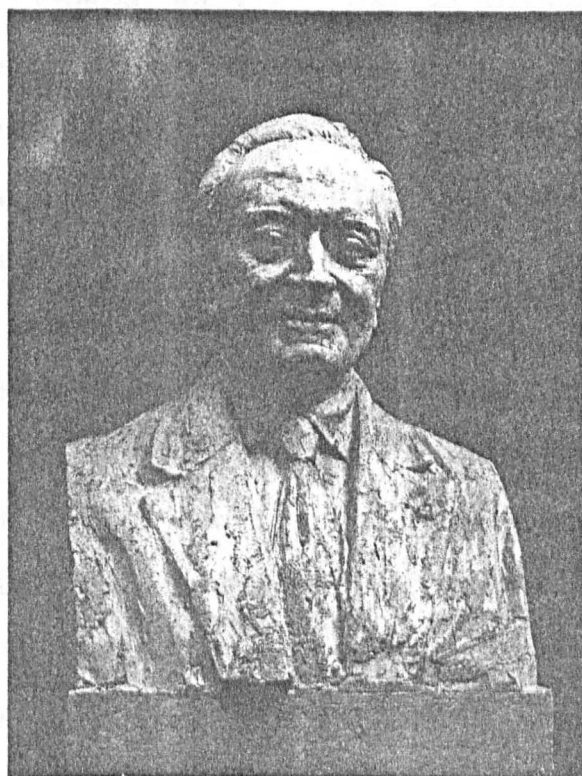


Albas and the River Lot

(ix)



The Château de Roussillon, Lot.



(x) The Bust of Guiches by Claude Granges  
erected in the town square in Albas  
in 1937



## APPENDIX E

- (i) Transcript of taped conversations with the nephew of  
Gustave Guiches, M. Jean Pagès, in Paris in April 1973.

Le Manifeste des Cinq

"A ce sujet, comme je travaillais avec mon oncle à 'Vouloir' et à 'Chacun sa vie', car il dictait et moi, de temps en temps, j'étais son secrétaire.... son secrétaire bénévole.... il m'a dit en parlant du Manifeste des Cinq que finalement tous les cinq qui étaient des fidèles de Zola avaient protesté contre des scènes grossières. Mon oncle m'a raconté qu'ayant revu Zola quelque temps après, malgré le bruit, Zola lui avait dit "Dans mes bras!" Alors mon oncle a raconté que ça l'avait beaucoup ému. Et moi je souriais un peu de ça parce que je trouvais que c'était un 'happy end' parfait. Il a dit, 'Mais il ne faut pas sourire. C'est très important qu'un grand homme comme Zola nous ait pardonnés aussi rapidement."

Joseph Guiches

"Mon grand-père, Joseph Guiches, père de Gustave Guiches, avait de très grands vignobles dans les environs d'Albas, de Camy, un peu partout où évidemment la vigne poussait d'une façon riche.. Le phylloxéra est arrivé et cela a ruiné tous les vignobles de la région. Maman m'a raconté que l'une des plus belles années avait été celle où mon grand-père avait réussi à vendre sa récolte pour 92,000 francs."



### L'Académie Française

M. Jean Pagès told me how Guiches did not press his candidature against Abel Hermant and so missed his chance to be elected to the Académie Française.

"Au bout de deux ou trois tours il avait réuni un certain nombre de voix, mais ce n'était pas suffisant pour que l'élection soit définitive. Alors il a préféré se désister en faveur d'Abel Hermant. Un de mes amis qui s'occupait des questions d'Académie Française et en même temps de la politique étrangère m'a trouvé au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Sabatier, que était à ce moment-là chef du bureau de presse m'a dit, "Ton oncle, c'est navrant, il n'aurait pas dû se désister en faveur d'Abel Hermant, parce que je savais qu'il était élu. "Voilà comment il a perdu sa chance d'être immortel."

### Les Deux Soldats

"Les Deux Soldats, l'on en a fait un film. Maurice Escande, qui est devenu l'administrateur de la Comédie Française et par une coïncidence assez curieuse était un lointain cousin, a joué le premier rôle des Deux Soldats dans le film, un film muet. Le film a eu un succès très moyen. Maurice Escande était trop beau garçon et un peu jeune pour jouer le rôle."

(The film of Les Deux Soldats was first shown in Paris cinemas on 1 July, 1923)

Conversation between M. Jean Pagès and myself.

J.P. Mon oncle avait déjà écrit le roman de Murat et voulait faire un film sur Murat. Et il m'a dit, "Puisque tu connais Abel Gance, va donc lui demander s'il est possible de faire en même temps un film sur Murat." A ce moment-là Abel Gance m'a dit, "Qui, mais, ce m'est très difficile de faire deux films à la fois surtout que je m'adonne à Napoléon, dont je fais à la fin un film considérable."... On n'a jamais tourné le film de Murat.....

E.L. Henri Austruy dans sa série dans 'la Revue' sur Gustave Guiches a publié une lettre de Guiches qui raconte un accident de voiture en route pour Camy.

J.P. Ah! C'était moi, dans les années '34. Je conduisais ma voiture sur la route entre Cahors et Camy. Naturellement mon oncle était à ma droite et me parlait toujours avec amour de son pays que nous traversions. Et moi j'étais un peu distrait quand est arrivée une voiture en face, d'un virage, très vite, et m'a heurté. Et moi à ce moment-là j'étais un petit peu désespéré et la voiture a basculé. C'était une voiture Citroën, la familiale qu'on appelait et très solide donc heureusement, tout en acier et nous sommes sortis comme nous avons pu, mais la tête en bas, par la portière. Nous sommes sortis tous absolument indemnes, sans égratignures, sans rien.

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J.P. J'ai connu mon oncle pour la première fois en 1904, mais j'étais tout ému et impressionné par le décor, parce que je vivais à la campagne, avant.... et il écrivait dans son beau bureau, il avait l'habitude d'avoir un chat dans le panier sur un coin du bureau. Et son chien aussi.... Il aimait beaucoup les animaux. Il sortait beaucoup à ce moment-là. Je l'ai connu quand il avait encore ses moustaches, mais qu'il a fait disparaître dès l'apparition dans les moustaches des fils blancs (bien avant la guerre). Lorsqu'il est sorti la première fois sans moustache dans le milieu du théâtre où il allait, les gens disaient "Mais, ce n'est plus Guiches". Il a dit "moi-même, quand je me regarde dans la glace je ne me reconnais pas!"

Sa corpulence était celle d'un homme de 45 ans. Il avait à peu près 1m. 69/70 et il pesait environ, à mon sens, 70-72 kilos environ, je crois. Il avait de très belles mains, des mains de prélat un peu grassouillets. Il était doux, sauf quand il se mettait en colère. Il parlait avec beaucoup de calme, beaucoup d'aisance. Il avait un léger accent du Lot qu'il a toujours conservé. Donc, il n'avait pas l'accent parisien. C'était agréable de l'entendre parler, comme, d'ailleurs ma mère, qui était sa soeur, avait conservé également l'accent du Lot. On roule un peu les 'r'.

E.L. Est-ce qu'il voyageait beaucoup?

J.P. Non. Je crois qu'il est allé une fois à Venise. Il aimait surtout se rendre dans le Lot où il adorait être tranquille, loin de toute manifestation. Je crois me rappeler qu'à un moment donné, c'est maman qui me l'a raconté ça, il a eu une sorte de 'breakdown' de fatigue et.... C'était à l'époque où mon grand-père vivait toujours... Il a dit, "Alors, la meilleure des choses, c'est que tu viennes dans ton pays natal, que tu reprennes un peu le contact avec le climat et que tu boives surtout le très bon vin que nous en avons ici. Ça te ferait énormément de bien."

En effet il est allé là-bas à Albas. Il a vécu là-bas avec sa femme, quelque temps. Puis il a repris un petit peu contact avec... vraiment une renaissance de la vie et il est reparti pour Paris.....

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E.L. Est-ce qu'il y a eu un changement dans sa façon de vivre après 1918?

J.P. Il a subi un petit peu les conditions chères de la vie. Il n'aimait pas tellement recevoir les gens. Il voulait toujours travailler.

E.L. Son argent d'avant la guerre, valait moins après la guerre.

J.P. Oui, les conditions d'existence étaient devenues plus difficiles, d'autant plus puisqu'il voulait conserver son train personnel de vie avec un loyer assez cher. Il n'a jamais eu de voiture parce qu'il ne voulait jamais conduire. Il n'aimait pas du tout les choses modernes. Il n'aimait pas lui-même être victime de cette nécessité du progrès. Conduire

une voiture c'était en dehors de ses possibilités physiques. Quand il sortait par exemple à Paris, je ne l'ai jamais vu prendre le métro. Il prenait un taxi.... Mon grand-père maternel, c'est-à-dire le père de Gustave Guiches a été percepteur nommé par le roi, si bien que maman m'a dit que lorsque son père est mort on a fait l'éloge funèbre de Joseph Guiches et que celui qui a fait l'éloge funèbre a eu cette parole "Fidèle à sa religion, fidèle à son roi et fidèle à sa famille".... parce qu'il était royaliste. Je me rappelle toujours qu'ils avaient un certain culte pour Marie-Antoinette. Il y avait un très beau buste en porcelaine de Marie-Antoinette qui était encore chez maman. Maman avait vécu dans cette atmosphère royaliste.

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J.P. Henri Lavedan. Mon oncle m'avait dit qu'il était sourd. Je ne le connaissais que par son nom. Vers 1920, 1921 avec des amis nous voulions faire également une sorte de petite revue et j'avais demandé à mon oncle si je pouvais avoir des introductions par certains de ses amis littéraires qu'il connaissait, Maurice Donnay, Henri Lavedan, Lucien Guitry.... Cette revue n'est pas née finalement. Il m'avait dit d'aller voir Henri Lavedan et il m'a dit "Parle assez fort." Quand je suis arrivé on m'a reçu tout de suite parce que je venais de la part de son ami Gustave Guiches. Alors je lui dis sur un ton un peu haut, "Maître, je viens vous voir.... Mais parlez un peu plus doucement, mon ami."

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J.P. D'Aurevilly était un vieil aristocrate. Ma tante lui avait fait un magnifique jabot et il avait dédicacé un de ses livres 'A Madame Guiches, qui m'a fait un jabot d'honneur.'

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J.P. Je n'ai vraiment connu mon oncle qu'en 1904... mais je ne connaissais pas son oeuvre littéraire. Je savais que c'était un écrivain. Je ne savais pas le succès qu'il avait ni rien. Il avait déjà un succès important, très connu à l'époque, comme écrivain, comme brillant causeur etc. A ce moment il devait peut-être déjà commencer à travailler à Vouloir et à Chacun sa vie je n'en sais rien. En somme j'ai connu surtout l'intimité de mon oncle à partir de 1908/9/10/11 parce que le soir après mon travail comme employé de bureau, chez une maison d'export et import, c'était une maison argentine... J'ai commencé à apprendre l'espagnol. Le soir j'étais libre à partir de 6h. et souvent je montais chez mon oncle qui habitait 104 rue d'Amsterdam, sa dernière maison, un très bel appartement avec un balcon au cinquième étage avec ascenseur et téléphone et pour moi c'était quelque chose d'extraordinaire. Il avait une organisation assez grande, une belle salle à manger, un salon, un bureau de travail, - c'était un grand appartement. On donnait de temps en temps de petits programmes. On a organisé de petites soirées dans le salon pour recevoir pas mal gens, de 1902 à 1935.

(ii)

Transcript of taped conversations with the daughter of  
Gustave Guiches, Mlle Marguerite Guiches, and his nephew  
M. Jean Pagès in Paris in April 1973.

Mlle.G. J'étais sa secrétaire. J'écrivais à la main.  
Nous étions Place Clichy, numéro 8. Il y avait  
une pharmacie en bas.

J.P. Vous êtes allés habiter rue d'Amsterdam vers  
1902. C'était un très bel appartement.

Mlle.G. Ah, c'était ravissant. On avait tout paré,  
c'était beau. On travaillait, maman s'en  
occupait pendant qu'il allait voir les éditeurs,  
tous les directeurs de théâtre, moi, je m'occupais  
de la machine à écrire. On était des copains.

J.P. Dès qu'il était installé dans son bureau de la  
rue d'Amsterdam il sortait assez peu, très peu.

Mlle.G. Très peu, oui. Mais tant qu'il y a eu... il  
y avait Lucien Guitry. Maman emmenait promener  
les deux enfants Guitry et moi. Et mon père  
restait avec Lucien pour travailler à la maison.

J.P. Sacha Guitry a survécu parce que Jean Guitry est  
mort dans un accident d'auto. Je me rappelle que  
mon oncle me racontait des histoires de Jean et  
de Sacha au lycée. Il m'a raconté que Lucien,  
qui était un des grands acteurs de l'époque, lui  
avait dit un jour "Gustave, il faut que tu viennes  
avec moi. Nous allons aller au lycée. C'était un  
lycée de religieux. Alors ils sont allés et alors  
il a dit, "Mon père, qu'est-ce que vous reprochez  
à mes enfants, puisque vous m'avez appelé. Ils ne  
sont pas sages ou quoi?" "Oh," a dit le père,



"Il y a des histoires assez troublantes. Je dis le mot carrément." Alors Lucien Guitry a répondu "Ce sont encore des histoires de queue!"

Mlle.G. Oh, ils étaient rigolos.

J.P. Sacha Guitry assistait beaucoup aux conversations de Gustave Guiches, Lucien Guitry, Tristan Gernard. Sacha notait les bons mots qu'il entendait sur ses manchettes, quand il était tout jeune.

Mlle.G. Maman disait à Lucien et à mon père "Maintenant je vais emmener promener les enfants", et le soir on allait les reconduire à Neuilly au lycée, parce que lui Lucien il avait d'autres choses à faire qu'à s'occuper des enfants. Il demeurait à ce moment-là Place Vendôme. Il avait une servante qui était à genoux devant lui d'adoration.

J.P. Et moi, je suis venu ensuite, vers 1907 ou 1908 et je lui servais de secrétaire un peu.

Mlle.G. Et moi comme dactylo!

Je suis née en 1883. Ils ont dû se marier en 81. Ils étaient très très jeunes. Le plus drôle de tout c'est que mon grand-père...

Le grand-père maternel...

Il y avait mon père qui est venu regarder Jeanne qui était... Un jour mon grand-père a dit

"Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce jeune homme, qui regarde tout le temps dans la vitrine". Il est venu pour voir maman. Maman a fini par avouer à son père qu'en effet ce jeune homme lui faisait la cour, qu'il était charmant. C'est comme ça qu'ils se sont mariés. Maman s'occupait de couture, d'une maison de couture. Elle lui donnait ses idées,

son goût. Elle avait beaucoup d'idées. Elle était charmante. Le magasin était Boulevard Haussmann là où il y a les Galeries maintenant. Mon grand-père avait une chemiserie de grand luxe, c'était très rare.

Maman était chez son père. Mon père, il avait remarqué que c'était une très jolie femme très agréable. Alors il venait avec son monocle et il la regardait.

J.P. Il portait un petit monocle à ce moment-là.  
Tu m'as dit que ton grand-père maternel s'occupait aussi un peu du mouvement littéraire.

Mlle.G. Oui, ça l'avait intéressé....

J.P. Je crois que c'était le moment où il avait écrit Céleste.

Mlle.G. Oui, c'était le début. Seulement il avait eu des articles au Figaro, au Gaulois.

J.P. Les articles portaient surtout sur les événements du jour ou quoi?

Mlle.G. Non, ils étaient fantaisistes.

E.L. Est-ce que les parents de Gustave venaient à Paris?

Mlle.G. Rarement, très rarement. A ce moment-là on ne se déplaçait pas comme maintenant... A cette époque-là c'était une histoire!

E.L. Dans ses souvenirs littéraire où il parle de ses conversations avec Huysmans...

Mlle. G. Oui, ah, c'étaient deux camarades qui ne pouvaient pas se quitter.

- E.L. Huysmans avait l'impression que Gustave ne s'entendait pas toujours bien avec son père.  
Est-ce que c'est vrai?
- Mlle.G. Non, je n'ai pas remarqué ça. Je n'ai jamais entendu parler de ça. Mon père avait un caractère charmant. Il ne discutait pas, c'était un homme extrêmement bien élevé. Il n'aurait pas disputé, il n'aurait pas... non. Il avait été élevé sévèrement par ses parents... Il voulait être un homme du monde.
- E.L. Naturellement, il voulait s'échapper pour venir à Paris.
- Mlle.G. Ah, bien, oui, c'était son bonheur, ça. Pour tous les jeunes à cette époque-là, leur bonheur c'était Paris.
- J.P. Je crois que mon grand-père, ton grand-père paternel à toi, et, moi, mon grand-père maternel, Puisque nous sommes cousins, eh bien, je crois qu'il voulait faire faire du droit à ton père, mais ton père voulait faire de la littérature.
- Mlle.G. Ah, oui!
- J.P. Sur quoi, les deux points différaient...
- Mlle.G. Mais je n'ai jamais entendu dire qu'il y ait eu des explications.
- J.P. Mais, non, pas de discussions, pas de contestations comme aujourd'hui. Non, il était très soumis et il était un bon fils et il avait un père bon et par conséquent il n'y avait pas de contestations entre eux.

Mlle.G. Il avait à peine vingt-deux ans, vingt et un ans. Quand est apparu un des premiers articles qu'il écrivait. C'était là où il s'arrêtait pour regarder maman.

E.L. Est-ce que votre mère l'a aidé dans son travail?

Mlle G. Oui, beaucoup, beaucoup. Elle était intelligente, elle était compréhensive.

J.P. Elle aimait classer aussi les papiers.

Mlle.G. Oui, parce qu'elle était très ordonnée. Elle savait très bien que c'étaient des choses précieuses...

Nous avons vécu à Camy. Il y avait une très jolie maison là, très confortable, avec une terrasse magnifique qui donnait sur la vallée tout au loin... et alors là nous étions en famille avec la sœur de maman... En général nous descendions à Cahors, venant de Paris. Là on reprenait un autre repas. Nous restions la nuit et puis nous repartions,... alors c'était tout près. Je crois que c'était une vingtaine de kilomètres... Nous avions quelquefois des amis qui venaient aussi passer quelques jours avec nous.

E.L. Et les vignobles de votre grand-père, il les avait vendus à ce moment-là?

Mlle.G. Je ne sais pas. J'étais trop petite pour me souvenir.

J.P. Je sais que les vignobles qu'avaient mon grand-père ont été attaqués par le phylloxéra.

Mlle.G. Ah, ç'a été la catastrophe!

J.P. C'est d'ailleurs à la suite de ça que mon oncle a écrit son livre La Bête, je crois.

Mlle.G. Ah, oui, c'était catastrophique parce que ça rapportait bien... Mais ils n'avaient aucune autre dépense que de se nourrir puisqu'ils avaient une très belle maison. A ce moment-là il n'y avait pas des contributions comme maintenant, il n'y avait pas des tas d'affaires. On avait sa maison, on était là... tout était très joli...

Je n'ai pas connu mon grand-père.

J.P. Non, il est mort en '81, ou '82.

Mlle.G. Et moi, je suis né en '83. Je suis née le 14 juillet. Dès que je grandis je m'intéressais à tout.

J.P. Mon grand-père, ton grand-père paternel, est mort à 86 ans. Il est mort subitement, presque, la nuit. Maman m'a raconté, puisque je n'étais pas né. Si, j'étais né, je crois.

E.L. Au début de la guerre, en 1914, vous êtes allés à Camy, n'est-ce pas, mais vous n'y êtes pas restés?

Mlle.G. Non, nous ne pouvions pas nous en aller comme ça. Mon père écrivait des articles dans les journaux. Nous habitions par ici. Nous avons habité Place Clichy.

E.L. Alors, votre père, qu'est-ce qu'il a fait pendant la guerre?

Mlle.G. A part ses articles et ses romans il ne s'occupait de rien du tout.

E.L. Est-ce que ses romans ont un élément autobiographique, pensez-vous? Par exemple, le héros des Deux Soldats a travaillé sur la terre, votre père, aussi?

Mlle.G. Ah, non, jamais, jamais... Il l'a écrit en famille à Camy. Nous avions une belle maison avec une grande terrasse. Alors, là, il avait son bureau, et puis alors, il se promenaient de long en large. Il n'aimait pas beaucoup aller sur la route.

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J.P. Ta mère m'a raconté que Léon Bloy, qui vivait seul, c'était la misère noire absolument, alors... Il était seul et il arrivait un soir, alors ma tante lui disait "Quittez vos chaussettes", et lui donnait des chaussettes. Mais les chaussettes qu'il quittait n'étaient pas extrêmement propres, elle les prenait avec la pincette et les mettait au feu. C'est ma tante qui me l'a raconté à moi.

Mlle.G. Tout le monde était de bonne humeur. Les pièces étaient belles rue St. Lazare.

J.P. Très grandes, oui.

E.L. Après la rue St. Lazare c'était...?

J.P. Place Clichy ou bien rue de Naples?

Mlle.G. Attends, je réfléchis, rue de Naples en premier, à la place Clichy, et puis à la rue d'Amsterdam.

J.P. Oui, Place Clichy, c'est juste la traversée pour aller rue d'Amsterdam. Seulement là, c'est un autre royaume, si on peut dire.

- Mlle.G. Lucien Guitry y venait avec ses deux fils.  
Lucien Guitry et mon père, c'étaient des camarades, ils étaient gentils ensemble et il y avait quelquefois la bourse qui était un peu pleine, alors maman préparait un plat un peu copieux, et puis une salade et puis voilà, qu'il fallait...
- E.L. Après la guerre les choses sont devenues un peu plus difficiles pour vous, parce que votre père n'a pas eu tellement de succès après la guerre.
- Mlle.G. C'était plus difficile à ce moment-là après la guerre. Là, il y a un trou un peu pour moi... parce qu'il fallait que je travaille.
- E.L. Mais votre père a continué de travailler.
- Mlle.G. Oui, il a travaillé jusqu'à sa dernière heure.
- E.L. Alors il préparait quelque chose à la fin?
- Mlle.G. Oui, il s'est affaibli, s'est fatigué, mais quand même...

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- J.P. Gustave Guiches a été opéré de la prostate, et alors la prostate était malheureusement cancéreuse. Le chirurgien m'a dit, "Il n'y a rien à faire. Elle est cancéreuse." Il ne l'a pas dit à lui. Il a survécu cinq, six mois. Je crois qu'il a été opéré au mois d'août '35, et il est mort pas très longtemps, je crois cinq, six mois après. Il n'avait jamais été malade, en somme.



Mlle.G. Ma foi, non. C'est-à-dire, qu'il était très entêté. Quand il était au travail il n'y avait rien à faire.

J.P. Alors, je vais vous parler d'une chose franchement. Mon oncle, trente ou trente-cinq ans auparavant avait eu un rétrécissement de la prostate. Alors le docteur que l'a sondé lui a dit "Revenez me voir tout de même dans quelque temps." Il n'a jamais voulu y retourner. Alors la prostate a fini par devenir pire, elle s'est enflammée et est devenue cancéreuse. Alors il a été obligé de se faire opérer.

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J.P. Bonnetain venait à la maison?

Mlle.G. Ah! Bonnetain. Ah, oui, il avait une fille qui avait mon âge.

E.L. Et Descaves aussi?

Mlle.G. Oui, Lucien Descaves.

J.P. Et Lavedan venait?

Mlle.G. Lavedan se dérangeait moins.

J.P. Lavedan était sourd et il se dérangeait très peu.

Mlle.G. On voyait beaucoup les Donnay. Si on n'était pas chez nous alors on y allait.

E.L. Et Rosny?

Mlle.G. Il ne venait pas à la maison..On le voyait dans des cercles... un peu partout.

J.P. Paul Margueritte?

Mlle.G. Oui, il y avait Paul et Victor.

J.P. Oui, deux frères.

Mlle.G. Moi, j'étais petite fille.

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Mlle.G. Mon père se mettait à table avec un plaisir infini. Quand je me mettais à table et que je n'avais pas l'air de faire attention, il disait, "Mais cette petite femme est insupportable."

J.P. Il faut que tu racontes le café. Parce que c'est une chose amusante. A la fin du repas à midi, Marguerite faisait du café à table, mais c'était une sorte de samovar que l'on renverse, en cuivre, c'était une chose russe, je crois. Elle préparait le café et renversait, on le faisait chauffer sur une petite lampe d'alcool. Quand c'était chaud on renversait. Alors ensuite quand c'était bien coulé on servait le café. Alors, mon oncle qui ne connaissait rien du tout à la confection du café, même à la cuisson des œufs, rien du tout, ça ne l'intéressait pas du tout, il remuait son café, le sucre dedans, et il trouvait qu'il était un peu clair. Il a dit, "Mais il y a de l'eau dedans!"

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J.P. Ton père travaillait sur un livre qu'il appelait Pile. Tu ne sais pas où est le manuscrit de ça? Parce que ça n'a pas été publié.

Mlle.G. Je ne crois pas que ça ait été fini.

J.P. Je crois que cela n'a pas été publié. Parce que mon oncle parlait d'un certain sujet qui était assez délicat à l'époque.

Mlle.G. Il faudra que je cherche...

J.P. Il m'en a lu certaines pages de sa propre main.

Mlle.G. Il y avait maman, mon père et moi et on parlait de tout ensemble. Quand nous étions à table, c'était notre moment de repos. Quand il y avait quelque chose qui nous intéressait particulièrement, il disait "Tu vois ça, prends ta machine," et je copiaais. Maintenant comme il est mort, ma tante Louise est morte, je me suis trouvée un peu dans des embarras financiers, je me suis trouvée un peu brouillée.

E.L. Est-ce que votre père a fait des voyages à l'étranger?

Mlle.G. Non, jamais. Il est allé une fois en Espagne je crois, pas pour longtemps. C'était un cerveau magnifique mais un peu paresseux. Il avait sa femme et sa fille et son travail. Il aimait être chez lui. Tout ça c'était le bonheur.

J.P. Il n'est pas allé une fois à Venise?

Mlle.G. Si, avec maman. Ils s'en allaient de temps en temps faire un petit voyage d'amoureux tous les deux. Ils fichaient le camp mais ils ne disaient rien. Je restais là avec ma tante Louise.

E.L. Après la guerre il est retourné au roman après avoir écrit des comédies pendant une vingtaine d'années.

Mlle.G. Oui, il était un peu fatigué. Les difficultés de la vie. La vie était assez difficile à cette époque-là. Ce n'était pas comme maintenant.

E.L. Est-ce qu'il sortait beaucoup?

Mlle.G. Pas énormément non. Nous allions beaucoup chez Maurice Donnay ou ils allaient déjeuner ensemble. Quelquefois j'allais avec eux. Ça dépendait de ce que j'avais à faire. Maurice Donnay était charmant.... Je lui servais de secrétaire. Je faisais des tas de choses. Je suis arrivé malgré tout ça à passer mon bachot. J'aimais étudier, j'aimais travailler.

E.L. Il a écrit La Tueuse après la guerre.

Mlle.G. Oui, parce qu'il avait beaucoup fréquenté le milieu politique. Il aimait travailler et qu'on le laisse tranquille. Quand on le dérangeait ça est allé mal, tout à fait mal. Quelquefois il m'a dit, "Si on téléphone tu diras que je suis sorti, je ne suis pas là."

J.P. Il ne répondait jamais au téléphone directement.

Mlle.G. Jamais, Il avait horreur de ça. Il retournait beaucoup à Camy. Il avait des amis là-bas.

E.L. Ses amis d'école?

Mlle.G. Oui, qui s'étaient mariés et qui étaient là.

E.L. Sans doute quelques-uns de ses amis ont apparu dans les romans.

Mlle.G. Oui, quelquefois il changeait le nom du personnage.

E.L. Est-ce qu'ils se sont reconnus?

Mlle.G. Quelquefois, mais il faisait ça avec discrétion  
Il photographiait les gens dans sa tête.

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| (iv) <u>Le Goût du Passé</u>  | 15 August 1901  |
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