

LEGENDS OF THE FALL RETOLD

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We are understanding what we have made, and its shape is ours; we have made history... the laws that govern it are not the laws of nature, but they are the laws that govern us. So let us learn, by all means, why the voices wailed that Pan was dead. Let us learn why Moses had horns, and why the Israelites worshipped a golden calf; why Jesus was a fish... But let us not think that in such explorations we have disposed of or robbed of significance the story these figures tell. The story remains; if it changes, and it does, it is because our human nature is not fixed; there is more than one history of the world. But when we believe that we have proved there is no story, that history is nothing but one damned thing after another, that can only be because we have ceased to recognise ourselves.

– John Crowley, *The Solitudes: Book I of the Aegypt Cycle*, pp. 84-5.

It is often true that the darkest shadows of the human imagination produce some of the greatest art, and the literary and artistic treatments of Satan are a prime example of this. Many studies have delineated the sociocultural contextual factors leading to the devolution of the Light-Bringer into a paragon of evil, and in the common era, first Dante, and then Milton consolidated the collective Western perception of the tale of Lucifer's fall from grace which has since formed the touchstone for his artistic and literary representation. As noted by religious scholar Elaine Pagels, there are three main Biblical sources that gave rise to the clusters of Luciferian narratives in Western culture: the first and best known, drawing on *Isaiah* 14, speaks of his outright rebellion; the second, based on the enigmatic verse in *Genesis* 6 and expanded on in the apocryphal *Enoch* I, tells the story of angels falling in love with human women, their subsequent fall and imprisonment; the third, based on early Jewish sources, blames the angelic refusal to accept humans as their equals for the celestial rift.

The monstrous Satan languishing in Dante's Ninth Circle of Hell and Milton's disgraced rebel angel may be the most familiar forms given to Lucifer in Western culture, but from the eighteenth century onwards, a new perspective

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began to emerge; that of a more Promethean figure whom many Romantic poets, artists and authors sought to redeem. This curious phenomenon, sometimes termed "Literary" or "Romantic Satanism", was the product of a number of sociocultural shifts and changes that took place throughout the "long eighteenth century", including the primacy of the "Age of Reason" and the cultural impact of the French revolution. As summarised by Ruben van Luijk in a recent anthology of essays on Satan in Western culture:

While Christian mythology had banned Satan to Hell and blamed him for evil, Literary Satanism to a greater or lesser degree rehabilitated the fallen angel and proclaimed that he had stood in his right after all. Secondly... they resurrected him from the burial the Enlightenment had given him... In traditional Christian theology, Satan's fall had been associated with proud, unlawful insurrection against divine authority. The *philosophes* and French Revolution however, had given 'insurrection' a wholly new, positive meaning for substantial parts of Europe's intellectual elite; and this revaluation reflected on the myth of Satan as well.... Satan as noble champion of political and individual freedom remained the most important theme of Literary Satanism throughout the nineteenth century.¹

The evolution and transformation of Milton's Lucifer into this new cultural hero has been eloquently detailed by Peter A. Schock in his *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron*,² a trend that carried over into France, where Satanism became a stock feature of the French occult milieu as well as of Decadent literature.

One of its earliest appearances is found in the work of J.K. Huysmans,³ an uneasy Catholic, and in his novel *La-Bas* ("Down there") he presents 'an incredible and untranslatable picture of sorcery, sacrilege, black magic, and nameless abominations, secretly practised in Paris... [giving] currency to the Question of Lucifer, promot[ing] it from obscurity into prominence, mak[ing] it the vogue of the moment.'⁴

1 Ruben van Luijk, 'Sex, Science, & Liberty: The Resurrection of Satan in 19th Century (Counter) Culture,' in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. by Per Faxneld & Jesper Aa. Petersen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 41-52 (p. 44).

2 P.A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2003).

3 Arthur Edward Waite, *Devil Worship in France: The Question of Lucifer* (London: Redway, 1896), p. 12; Webb, *The Occult Underground*, p. 164.

4 Arthur Edward Waite, *Devil Worship in France: The Question of Lucifer* (London: Redway, 1896), p. 12; Webb, *The Occult Underground*, pp. 156-161.

Even though the work of earlier Decadent poets such as Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), and Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) feature demonic themes and musings on Good and Evil, they are more after the style of Milton, featuring a specific decadence and perversity⁵ reflecting and revelling in the ‘tortured poet’ persona, with aesthetic, rather than occult content and intent. Though there are certainly metaphysical and ontological concerns in the work of these, and other poets of the time, from Baudelaire’s seminal *Flowers of Evil* to Rimbaud’s *Season in Hell*, the demonic element is more of an aesthetic framework than any indication of occult pursuits, reflecting the ‘metaphysical despair,’ or ‘incandescent melancholia’⁶ of the dark side of Romanticism.

The widespread and often arbitrary use of these motifs had the effect of ‘Satanism and Aestheticism [becoming] equally confounded with other critical definitions – Decadence and Symbolism,’ and as historian James Webb observes: ‘as in general terms the reaction against rationalism had set in, in aesthetic terms the reaction was against naturalism... Whether it led to “Satanism” or the cult of the Beautiful, the face this reaction presented to the public was uniformly rebellious.’⁷

Writing in 1896, occult historian A.E. Waite summarises the two perspectives of Satanism current in France of the time as follows:

It must, however, be observed, that modern devil-worship, as exposed by its French experts, has two aspects,... There is (a) devil-worship pure and simple, being an attempt to communicate with evil spirits, admitting that they are evil; (b) the cultus of Lucifer, star of the morning, as distinguished from Satan, on the hypothesis that he is a good spirit.... The doctrine of Lucifer... is, in fact, the revival of an old heresy founded on what we have most of us been accustomed to regard as a philosophical blunder; in a word, it is a Manichæan system... affirming the existence of two equal first principles, Adonai and Lucifer, it regards the latter as the god of light and goodness, while the Christian Adonai is the prince of darkness and the veritable Satan... Adonai reigns surely... but he is the author of human misery, and Jesus is the Christ of Adonai, but he

5 Best encapsulated in Rimbaud’s famous statement: ‘I say that one must be a seer, make oneself a seer. The poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses. Every form of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he consumes all the poisons in him, and keeps only their quintessences. This is an unspeakable torture during which he needs all his faith and superhuman strength, and during which he becomes the great patient, the great criminal, the great accused – and the great learned one! – among men.’ Letter to Paul Demeny, 18 May 1871, in Melissa Kwasny, *Towards the Open Field: Poets on the Art of Poetry* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), p. 147.

6 Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, (New York: SUNY, 1994) p. 47

7 Webb, *The Occult Underground*, p. 163.

is the messenger of misfortune, suffering, and false renunciation.... The worshippers of Lucifer have taken sides in the cause of humanity... with the baffled principle of goodness; they co-operate with him in order to insure his triumph.⁸

This radical role-reversal between the Christian god and Lucifer is indeed one of many revivals of what could be broadly termed Gnostic heresy, but it is an over-simplification to call it Manichaeism.⁹ The kind of Luciferianism Waite is describing recognises two, opposing, divine principles and can be described as “syncretic Gnosticism”, a form typical of the late nineteenth century. It is characterised by the conviction that ‘the origins and the essence of gnosis are not to be found alongside Christianity and Hellenism, but alongside the old oriental religions, either of Babylon, Egypt or Iran, bringing authors to identify gnosis with dualism.’¹⁰

Yet there are two different brands of this dualism, exemplified by Manichaean and Valentinian cosmology, and the difference is important. In the Manichaean cosmogony, the ‘emphasis is on dualism rather than holism, and... the goal is “restoration of the lost separateness” rather than “the lost wholeness”’. In Valentinian cosmology the opposite occurs: ‘For the Valentinians it is unacceptable that the principle of evil should have an independent ontological status on a par with the principle of good. Evil must be an aberration.’¹¹

This idea is strongly reflected in the work of French Symbolist author and occultist, Joséphin Péladan, a neglected but significant figure of the French occult revival whose prolific oeuvre was oriented towards exploring these questions and using art in all its forms for the restoration of “the lost wholeness” through a curious Luciferian outlook. Based on a complex cosmology with a formidable array of influences, the notion of a superior, “daimonic race” as being the progenitors and benevolent helpers of mankind, lay at the heart of his work. As with many other motifs found throughout his oeuvre, Péladan constantly cross-references between his novels and his more theoretical works, leaving tantalizing clues for the reader to follow, only to reveal a vast and complex cosmology within which each of these notions had a specific role to play. Though Péladan’s influences and recourse to earlier sources are evident throughout his work, his

8 Waite, *Devil Worship in France*, pp. 15, 17; cf. Webb, *The Occult Underground*, pp. 142-3.

9 “Manichaean”, *Oxford Dictionaries* (Oxford University Press: 2010). Accessed 21 October 2012. <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Manichaean>>.

10 Michel Tardieu & Jean-Daniel Dubois, *Introduction à la Littérature Gnostique I: Collections retrouvées avant 1945, Initiations au Christianisme Ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), p. 34

11 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘A Dynamic Typological Approach to the Problem of “Post-gnostic” Gnosticism’, *ARIES*, 16 (1992), 5 43 (pp. 29-30).

originality lies in their synthesis into an overarching and coherent whole, traceable only when one takes the full span of his oeuvre into account. That is a very different project, so following a brief look at the convictions underpinning Péladan's approach, in this article we will focus mainly on the legend of the Fall as retold, sensitively and often surprisingly, within not only his fictional work, but as the backbone of his whole worldview.

Péladan was convinced that in redeeming Lucifer and in coming to understand the "natural laws" underpinning human existence, it was possible for humanity to grow into its true potential and bring about a reunification with the divine on a grand scale. He set himself the lifelong task of expressing these notions through his novels, his theoretical works, through his Rosicrucian and Kabbalistic Order, and through the influence he exercised on the circle of Symbolist artists who flocked to exhibit at his Salons. Although ultimately Péladan was to be ridiculed for his zeal and eccentricity, his work represents a Symbolist oeuvre that is worth exploring not only for its richness in terms of occult content and aesthetic philosophy, but as a life's work that is admirable for its sheer power of conviction and coherence.

Though Péladan viewed occultism through the lens of art, his understanding of occult traditions and esoteric philosophy was anything but superficial. To the contrary he was both extremely well read and his choice of symbolism rested on his occult beliefs and cosmology, and he went so far as to rewrite *Genesis*, partly following the counter-Enlightenment "tradition" of analogical analysis and allegorical mythography as found in the work of Athanasius Kircher, Antoine Court de Gébelin, Pierre-Simon Ballanche, Delisle de Sales, Fabre d'Olivet, and Eliphas Lévi.

The idea of allegorical and mythographical history is a whole other chapter which we do not have time to expand on in detail. Suffice it to say that it entails a mythological and allegorical reading of human history, whereby mythic and symbolic understandings are seen as being of equal value to factual history. The sequence of human events and the place of humanity in the cosmos are understood within mythical, rather than literally historical, frames of meaning. Thus, mythic cosmogonies such as Hesiod's *Theogony* are conflated with, say, Biblical or other cosmogonies, alongside actual historical events to produce a "universal" history and to explain momentous events (such as the Deluge), as well as the nature and meaning of human existence. They are not interpreted according to free association between similar figures, but on the basis of "universal" principles revealed through allegorical readings. Péladan drew strongly on elements of Fabre d'Olivet's "universal history," regarding which Fabre d'Olivet himself explains:

Those who in general write upon this serious subject, more occupied with themselves and their particular passions than with the universality of things of which the whole escapes them, circumscribe their views too much and show too plainly that they know nothing of the history of the world. Because they have heard of the Greeks and Romans, or because they have read the annals of these two peoples in Herodotus or Thucydides, in Titus Livius or Tacitus, they imagine all that is known... That which they lack, I repeat, is the knowledge of the true principles, and this knowledge, which depends on the universality of things, is always produced by it, or produces it irresistibly.¹²

Fabre d'Olivet perceived God as a divine 'tetrad' encompassing the three "universal" principles of Providence (represented in man by intelligence), Destiny (instinct), and Will (understanding), the last of which is the point of contact between man and God. While in "universal man" (prelapsarian Adam) the triad is complete and in harmony, following the Fall, the three principles were divided among Adam's three sons, with Cain representing Will, Abel as Providence and Seth as Destiny.¹³ They became the progenitors of humanity, each giving birth to one of the human races, in a reflection of Mosaic genealogy; a trend popular among eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars, according to which the races of mankind were perceived as being descendants of Noah's three sons.¹⁴

For Fabre d'Olivet, to understand history was to perceive all historical and mythological data as fragments of a greater whole based on 'essence' rather than becoming too attached to the forms taken by that essence.¹⁵ In other words, factual historical detail was only one small part of the whole, and where unrecorded history was concerned, allegorical and philosophical approaches could reveal the totality of historical truth. To this end he claimed:

Be assured, savants of the world, it is not in disdaining the sacred books of nations that you show your knowledge; it is in explaining them. One cannot write a history without monuments, and that of the world is no exception.¹⁶

12 Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, *Hermeneutic Interpretation of the Social State of Man and of the Adamic Race*, trans. by Nayan Louise Redfield (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), pp. xviii-xix

13 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

14 Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 41-57, cited and discussed in Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment*, pp.50-1.

15 *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. xiv-xv.

These influences offer a compelling explanation for Péladan's lasting obsession with a variety of motifs drawn from across the spectrum of world mythology. To gain insight into his *literary* use of motifs such as Fall mythology in particular, we must perceive it as he did, from a Symbolist perspective. This is summarised in the Symbolist Manifesto penned by Greek poet and essayist Jean Moréas (1856-1910) in 1886:

Symbolist poetry tries to house the Idea in a meaningful form not to its own end, but subject to the Idea. The latter in its turn will never appear without the sumptuous clothing of analogy; for the essential character of Symbolist art consists in never going so far as to conceive of the Idea in itself. So this art will never show details of nature, actions of humans, concrete phenomena: for they are only the appearances destined to represent to the senses their esoteric affinities with primordial Ideas.¹⁷

This description of Symbolism holds true for Péladan's use of the genre. In using the metaphor of "clothing", or "housing", an Idea, Moréas is referring to the notion of giving form to otherwise elusive Platonic Ideas, stressing that symbols are no more than vessels, or vehicles for the communication of Ideas, which take their form directly from the qualities of the ideas themselves. The symbolic form has aesthetic, as well as functional value, and takes on an almost sacred role in the process of communicating the "primordial Ideas" that Moréas speaks of. The process of creating such a form, was to Péladan a supremely sacred act, summarised in his aphorism "Artist, you are a priest. Art is the supreme mystery. Artist, you know that art descends from heaven. If you create a perfect work, a soul will come to inhabit it."

In his seminal artistic treatise, *L'Art Idealiste et Mystique*, Péladan wrote: "In these pages Art is presented as a religion, or, if you will, as an intermediary aspect of religion between the physical and the metaphysical."¹⁸ He summarised his whole theory in the axiom: 'Art is the spirituality of forms,' and lauded Plato and the Promethean potential within Man, saying that: "Plato magnificently explains the propensity of the human creator, the ravisher of fire; he makes of him a daimon, an intermediary being between the mortal and the immortal." Péladan's concept of the artist as an intermediary and supreme initiate, as well as his intensive use of Fall mythology, falls directly in line with ideas elaborated by Romantic poets and philosophers such as Novalis, Schlegel, and Pierre-Simon Ballanche, whereby the poet is respectively:

17 Jean Moréas, "Symbolist Manifesto", *Le Figaro* 18 September 1886; translation in Mary Ann Caws (ed.), *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 51.

18 Berthelot, vol. III, p. 29

...the recipient and transmitter of revelation and a divine universal language,' 'a priest who will lead humanity to its eschatological fulfillment by relinking the world here below and divine transcendence,' and 'poetry is the intuitive faculty of penetrating the essence of beings and things.'¹⁹

This Promethean worldview derives from the complex interplay between Romantic, Enlightenment, and theosophical thought, heavily infused by the work of Jacob Boehme, and shaped during the "Second Golden Age"²⁰ of theosophy, between 1750 and 1850, in the work of Counter-Enlightenment intellectuals. One significant current to emerge during this period was the Sophianic tradition, a second was Fall mythology, and the central notions underpinning them both were a new perspective on the nature of time, and the primacy of the imagination as a faculty permitting human understanding of the divine, capable of achieving the reintegration both of the duality within man, and of the fallen world with the divine.

Boehme's greatly influential work deals with the 'myths of the androgynous Adam and the Noble Virgin of Divine Wisdom,'²¹ connecting this to the Fall and ultimate goal of eschatological resolution through a reunion with the Divine Sophia and a lived process of 'a path of individual transmutation' via which 'God must become man, man must become God.'²² According to Boehme, 'the human being as a microcosm contained all the cosmic elements and principles and held a latent power over them. Ascending to the divine life and attaining moral perfection, man could esoterically project the harmony of his inner nature into his physical environment as well.'²³ All of these ideas, while expressed and implemented rather differently, are also found in the sequence of influences received by Péladan.

Péladan was not suggesting that mythology should be taken literally as history, but that its symbolic language should be used to understand and express deeper, inexpressible principles. He demonstrates his awareness of the difference between historical fact and mythic history and his solid understanding of the scientific research methods of his time in his book *Les Idées et les Formes: Antiquité*

19 Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, *La langue hébraïque restituée*, (1815-1816); F. Schlegel, Novalis, *Athenaeum* (1798-1800); Pierre-Simon Ballanche, *Vision d'Hébal* (1831); *Orphée* (1829).

20 Antoine Faivre, 'Christian Theosophy,' in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, pp. 258-267 (p. 263)

21 *ibid.*, p. 189.

22 Versluis, *The Book of Wisdom*, p. 21, citing Jacob Boehme, *Signatura Rerum*, (1621) X.53.

23 David V. Zdenek, 'The Influence of Jacob Boehme on Russian Religious Thought,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Mar. 1962), 43-64 (p. 45); cf. Jacob Boehme, *The Signature of all Things* (1622); Antoine Faivre, 'The Theosophical Current: A Periodization,' *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 3-48, cited in: Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, 'HPSM 156, pp. 10-12

Orientale;²⁴ a careful, sober work in which he explores the known history, art, racial features and mythologies of various Middle Eastern civilisations. Written some ten years after a pilgrimage he undertook to Greece and the Middle East in 1898, it comprises mature, accurate, and down-to-earth overviews of these civilisations in support of his simultaneously Traditionalist and Platonic premise that 'A panoramic view of the oriental oeuvre, following evolution, begins in Egypt, at the dawn of history, civilisation, and art, and Chaldea comes next: these two mother civilisations invented everything, ideas and forms.'²⁵

Péladan's recourse to ancient civilisations is not motivated by a perennialist agenda or an appeal to the notion of the noble savage, rather, it is based on a subtle, Platonic premise (emphasis mine):

One must have seen, it is the complement to having read. Greece breathes on the metopes of the Parthenon as in the tragedies of Sophocles, Egypt has bequeathed us her temples and not her texts. We understand it today: the museum follows the library and *knowledge of forms is necessary for understanding ideas...*

What Péladan appears to have done here is to have taken Fabre d'Olivet's notion of using monuments (as well as art in all its forms) as a series of signposts through which to understand, not history, but the evolution of human creative expression that gave form to Ideas (emphasis mine):

[T]o learn to see', [to understand that] art is a universal language, [to] penetrate the arcanum of beauty...[which is] the mystery of forms. An initiation is necessary to understand them at the same time as a disposition.... What is Art? Human creation. God made the universe (macrocosm), man made the temple (microcosm), from where arts emerged.... What is a monument, if not a calculation of lines and volumes for the expression of spiritual will? From the forest path and from the cavern to the cathedral, human work appears colossal. *What is a figure such as the sphinx or the winged bull with a human face, if not a philosophical combination of natural motifs for the manifestation of an idea?* From the cat to the sphinx, from the savage bull to the genius that guards the temple threshold, through quasi-divine operations the artist raises himself to the level of creator.²⁶

24 *Les Idées et les Formes: Antiquité Orientale, Egypte – Kaldée – Assyrie – Chine – Phénicie – Judée – Arabie – Inde – Perse – Aryas d'Asie Mineure* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1908).

25 Péladan, *Antiquité Orientale*, p. 7.

26 *Ibid.*, pp.9, 10-11, 13

Though in the preceding excerpt Péladan is using Assyrian art as a springboard, this approach applied equally to the rest of his work and selected motifs. His aesthetic theory drew strongly on his obsession with Fall mythology, as, following Fabre d'Olivet, he believed that the Biblical interpretation of the Fall of both Lucifer and man, was not quite as it appeared.

Fabre d'Olivet's reinterpretation of *Genesis* rests on the premise that religious conflict between the three main monotheistic religions was caused by successive mistranslations of the *Bible*, owing to the corruption of the Hebrew language. In his subversive reinterpretation of the Hebrew language and of Biblical cosmogony, *La Langue hébraïque restituée* ²⁷ (1815) he proposed a new and corrected Hebrew grammar and vocabulary, and then proceeded to translate sections of the Bible in order to prove his point. He argued that religious conflict between the monotheistic religions was caused by successive mistranslations of the Bible, owing to the corruption of the Hebrew language. His conclusions were replete with theological implications that would fuel a particular brand of Luciferianism²⁸ that became central to Péladan's work.

According to Fabre d'Olivet, Adam was originally androgynous and immortal, and his female counterpart, *Isha*, not yet a separate entity, represented his 'will, or "volitional faculty"'. For Fabre d'Olivet, the man and woman of *Genesis* together form universal man and constitute a single androgynous individual.²⁹ The fall occurred when Adam sought to become equal to God, by taking full generative control of 'the very principle of his existence' – which is to say that it would have bestowed upon Adam the capability of creation, thus setting him up as a rival to God. Here things become more complex. According to both Fabre d'Olivet and Péladan, this could not be permitted as it would have been a direct contravention of natural law. However, Adam now had knowledge of the possibility of free will and self-determination, and thus, in permitting him to remain immortal, he would have been condemned to an eternity of misery as a lesser being without full volition. Therefore, as an act of mercy, 'Adam was taken out of eternity where he would have remained in eternal anguish and suffering, and placed in time'.³⁰

By making Adam and his descendants mortal, with lives governed by time,

27 *La Langue hébraïque restituée et le véritable sens des mots hébreux rétabli et prouvé par leur analyse radicale ouvrage dans lequel on trouve réunis : (1) une dissertation sur l'origine de la parole ; (2) une grammaire hébraïque ; (3) une série de racines hébraïques ; (4) un discours préliminaire ; (5) une traduction en français des dix premiers chapitres du Sépher, contenant la Cosmogonie de Moïse* (Paris: Chez l'auteur; Barrois; Eberhart: 1815; Lausanne: L'Âge d'homme, 1985); Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, *The Hebrew Tongue Restored And the True Meaning of the Hebrew Words Reestablished and Proved by their Radical Analysis*, trans. Nayan Louise Redfield (New York & London: Putnam & Sons, 1921).

28 This term will be discussed and elucidated at length in the following section.

29 Busst, 'The Androgyne,' p. 16.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

the suffering caused by his limited ability to control the creative principle of his existence would be diffused through time and the generations, until it eventually disappeared entirely. Since the creative principle was now limited by time, within the context of a mortal life, man could still express it to the limits of his ability, and in doing so, achieve a form of reintegration with the divine. However, a residual desire for this lost potential would remain, and this is the foundation of evil, which, according to Fabre d'Olivet, would eventually be resolved by the very passage through time, at which point time would end and 'universal man will return to his former state of "indivisible and immortal unity."³¹

Péladan was greatly preoccupied by this question of evil, as well as the question of how man could expedite the process of reintegration. He was also convinced that the world was the creation, not of God, but of the angels, and that it was these same entities who rended the androgyne because it was unable to acquire self-awareness. Thus Adam and Eve became two separate entities, each imperfect, each missing one part of the whole, but this separation, Péladan wrote, was that which gave them the ability to look outside themselves and begin the process of developing self-awareness which would be complete only when the pair could reunite in body, soul and spirit.³²

However, the inherent imperfection in their natures as individuals was that which gave rise to original sin, since, according to Péladan, male and female received slightly different qualities; where man received intellect and spirit, woman received volition and instinct, and this imbalance caused evil to enter the world. In Péladan's reinterpretation of *Genesis* III, a dialogue takes place between Eve (whom Péladan names Aischa), Nahash (the serpent of *Genesis*), Adam, and Elohim the creator. Nahash asks Aischa why they have not been allowed to cultivate their sensitivity and understanding of all phenomena, and consciousness of essential reality. Joah Elohim replies to Aischa that if they were to develop such consciousness, this would lead to an understanding of good and evil. Driven by a passionate curiosity, Aischa sought to learn more of this mystery, and since she represented the force of volition, she was able to convince Adam to do so, and thus "they came to know, with lucidity, that they were mutually imperfect and unable to bear the mysteries they had provoked, their minds grew dim and they trembled at their own weakness."³³

Joah Elohim goes on to chastise Adam and Aischa for their curiosity, and then speaks to Nahash, identifying it as "the elemental unconscious, an incoherent principle". Péladan's interpretation of the following verses are particularly enlightening:

³¹ Ibid., p. 16.

³² J. Péladan, *Comment on Devient Fée*, p. 36.

³³ Péladan, *Comment on Devient Fée*, p. 39; interpretation of Genesis 3:7.

14. Joah Elohim said to Nahash: "Since you have upset the equilibrium, you will be the incoherent principle, dangerous to all that breathes, according to your principle of unconscious attraction, you will be the base vortex of elemental exhalation and all dissonance will come from you.

15. Between you, the elementary unconscious, and Aischa, the superior unconscious, I will place hostility. Her passion will oppose your whirling, and your whirling will stifle her passion.

16. And to Aischa: "I will multiply your vulnerabilities, that Nahash may attack without rest, but I will also multiply your points of sensitivity towards your conscious intellect, Aisch [Adam]: and you will always be extreme in both senses, with a perpetual, painful appetite, ceaselessly focused on your positive reflection Aisch, whose reflection you are; you will never know true existence and you will never be coloured, except by his reflection."

17. And to Adam: "Since you have ceded your unconscious reflection, and your senses followed it into the vortex towards this notion of essence [divine truth] that I have forbidden you, you have condemned yourself, so be conscious, understand your relativities and your connections, now you can only progress through pain, your only benefit now is your immortality."

18. "Nature, henceforth independent of and disobedient towards you, will force you to earn everything, even the elements of your vegetable life."

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24. Adam and Eve now reduced to the human principle, Joah Elohim interposed the collective entity called Cherubim into an orbit emerging from the primitive, Edenic stasis, into this new becoming through pain. And the collective entity Cherubim was the second cause, the conceiver and fertilizer of mysteries, destined to represent to Adam, through its imperious mirages, in an intellectual atmosphere, a Nahash of light whose incessant whirling would circumscribe an orb of ideality around perceptible life.³⁴

³⁴ Péladan, *Comment on Devient Fée*, pp. 41-2.

In this excerpt, we have the first Fall: that of both Satan, and Adam and Eve. Nahash is the name given to the serpent in the Biblical *Genesis*, but it is open to interpretation, and here Péladan designates it as the uncreated principle of chaos and the unconscious impulse. In other works he is more explicit; and it should be noted that in the beginning of the chapter in which this excerpt is found, he has taken care to leave signposts; there are several quotations from his other books – mainly from his novels, which lead to clearer explanations of his meaning. The “Nahash of light” incessantly orbiting the perceptible world is none other than Satan in Péladan’s cosmology; a point confirmed by repeated references to Satan’s transformation into an eternally burning sun:

In the Ether, where the giant stars circle, there was a small world – insubordinate to the Sun – a small, vagrant world. The Ancients of Days and the Watchers know the sin of the planets. The Sun, is the heart of Satan who burns... [He] wanted to become the Messiah, his demon’s heart was no less than the heart of a prince; he had beauty, genius: but charity was lacking and everything was confounded. God left him his glory when punishing his crime: the soul of the false Jesus is the fuel of the sun, resplendent over the world.³⁵

Here Péladan is essentially demonstrating Satan’s Promethean nature, referring to the forbidden and failed attempt to lead Aisch and Aischa toward self-awareness, in a very different take on the question of the fall of Lucifer. Even God recognised his good, though misguided, intentions according to Péladan, and thus he is condemned to become the eternal light-bringer. Péladan could not fathom the concept of original sin being an immutable curse on mankind, nor could he accept the idea that either Satan, or mankind were eternally condemned. He stated this quite openly in an interlude entitled *Arcanum of Lucifer, or of Birth* (capitalisation his; italics my emphasis):

I deny demonology as it is taught in the seminaries.... and I deny it, based on my faith in a Greek, and Orthodox phrase: my authority, oh naïve curates, is His Majesty Saint Dionysius the Areopagite:³⁶ “Absolute evil does not exist; evil is an accident of goodness.” *Demons are not essentially evil, they have lost angelic goodness, but they maintain their natural forces.*

³⁵ Péladan, *Istar*, pp. 257, 261-262.

³⁶ Here Péladan, like others before him, is conflating Dionysius the Areopagite, an early Christian convert, with Pseudo-Dionysius of the 5th or 6th century CE. See: Rorem, Paul. *Pseudo-Dionysius: A commentary on the texts and an introduction to their influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rorem, Paul and John C. Lamoreaux, ‘John of Scythopolis on Apollinarian Christology and the Pseudo-Areopagite’s True Identity’ *Church History*, 62,4 (1993), 469–482.

Were they evil to themselves, they would corrupt themselves. If they are evil for others, then who do they corrupt?

Substance, power, or operations: they corrupt that which is susceptible to corruption.

THEN, EVIL IS NOT THERE FOR EVERYTHING AND IN EVERYTHING, they weakened in upholding their principle, they forsook divine goodness in habit and operation: they were named evil, due to the debilitation of their natural function.

Evil is not among the demons in the form of evil, but as *a defect and lack of perfection in their attributes.*

Finally, [according to] St. Thomas Aquinas:

“The demon wants to obtain this similarity with God that comes from grace by virtue of its nature, and not with divine help.”...

Onto this serious and healthy notion of the demon [as] obscured angel, I have grafted the occult idea of involution and evolution; there are two series of beings here below: beings who, born of the earth, attempt to rise, and others, born of the spirit, for whom earthly life is a fall and an expiation of some mysterious crime of the beyond.³⁷

Elsewhere he was to repeat his conviction that evil was not inherently woven into the fabric of creation, seeing it rather as a natural inevitability, summarised thus:

Evil does not exist in God, or in man, it is no more than a consequence of sequences of events. Subjected to overwhelming organic needs, to passions, and to false ideals, we have to vanquish either our conscience or our feelings, and this fight between multiple forces causes accidents which are [the root of] evil.³⁸

These passages summarise Péladan’s whole Luciferian perspective; he saw the various levels of being – angels, d(a)emons, and humans as irrevocably interconnected and interdependent, a set of beliefs forming the core of his occult philosophy as well as his way of life. As noted by scholar Nelly Emont with regard to Péladan’s recurrent interest in this theme:

The spirits of those beings survived the deluge, and ... they would intervene in men’s affairs, a role they would play until the end of time. These beings that Péladan named ‘daimons,’ and which, according to the Neo-Platonists, were intermediaries between God and man, are the ‘obscure

³⁷ Péladan, *Comment on Devient Artiste*, p. 41.

³⁸ Péladan, *Traité des Antinomies* (Paris: Chamuel, 1892), p. 186

offspring of angelic descent,' and nothing happens on earth without their intervention. [...] Péladan acted and spoke as if he were not only one of the [great] initiates [...] but as if he himself were one of those daimons who, until the end of time, intervene among men. An initiate, who wanted to be an initiator, but an exemplary one.³⁹

All of these tantalizing references are drawn together and clarified, not, as it might be thought, in Péladan's more theoretical works, but in his novels; in fact his theoretical monographs are only elucidated when read alongside them. As noted earlier, although he was capable of discussing these ideas in more literal and philosophical terms, he believed that for such complex and archetypal notions to be fully understood, the best way to communicate them was through symbolic expression, and he utilized his literary skills to this end.

His novels were not intended to be read as fiction, and he repeated this at every opportunity. Styled as *éthopées*, they were not intended so much to entertain, as to teach. The term *éthopée* is a figure of speech stemming from the Greek *ethologia* or *ethopoia*, literally meaning study or creation of *ethos* (understood as customs or mores). Essentially, Péladan's books, plays, and characters, were themselves both artistic and occult 'signs' for esoteric meaning, drawing on several centuries of universalist esoteric thought, and the perceived power of the written word to manifest change in the material world. In a biography written in 1946, Péladan's close associate and Rosicrucian successor Emile Dantinne sheds light on his motivation and confirms the necessity of reading between the lines of Péladan's fictional work:

One should not search for romantic intrigues in his books, apart from two or three of them; right from the start derivative elements fade and are dominated by an esoteric preoccupation. This preoccupation is essentially the esoteric explanation of the first books of *Genesis*. From the Rosicrucian conception of the first book of Moses there emerges a metaphysics that permeates all of Péladan's work. He includes everything, everything down to his own personality. He considers the 'Oelohites' [Nephilim], those mysterious sons of the Elohim who loved the daughters of men and with whom he is concerned in the fifth book of *Genesis*, to be superior beings, attached to the mysteries of the spiritual world. In *Typhonia*, an autobiographical novel, he presents himself as the Sâr, the Oelohite opposed to materialism and widespread Pharisaism; in book II of the prologue of *Istar*, he defines the psychology of the Oelohite.⁴⁰

39 Nelly Emont, 'Introduction à l'œuvre de Joséphin Péladan,' in *Les Péladan, Les Dossiers H* (Lausanne : L'Age D'Homme : 1990), p.70 .

40 Dantinne, *L'œuvre et la pensée de Péladan*, p. 163 cf: Joséphin Péladan, *Les idées et les formes*:

The two novels cited here by Dantinne, *Istar* in particular, reveal the full depth of Péladan's understanding of the idea of the Fall. *Istar* centres around the story of Istar and Nergal, both of them Oelohites, children of Bené-Satan, himself the son of Satan, who were given the chance to atone for their father's sins by living out a sequence of mortal lives alongside mankind, so as to instill divine genius among brutish "terrestrials". The punishment is made more tragic because the Oelohites are fatally attracted to one another, yet incest is of course perceived as the greatest sin of all.

Péladan uses this moral bind to illustrate the virtues of Platonic love, a religious kind of eroticism which can eschew physical contact while exalting spiritual love and devotion. He makes full use of all the opportunities the narrative and its motifs give him to explore the redemptive potential of prioritising spiritual union, the metaphysical properties of the androgyne, and the occult pathways hidden within the stories of the first and second angelic fall – the first being that of Adam, Aischa-Eve, and Nahash-Satan, and the second being that of the Oelohites, some of whom, according to his tale, took their place among mankind for all eternity, seeking redemption as they took on the role of teachers of mankind with whom their fates were forever intertwined. Teasingly, Péladan uses Kabbalistic references and almost playfully decodes their meanings, illustrated by the protagonists themselves, while also drawing in his broad knowledge of world mythology to enrich the referential layers of his narrative. Several chapters begin with an almost ritualistic sequence which is repeated, in reverse, at the end, giving these chapters a particularly occult atmosphere, and Péladan displays a number of different styles of expression and writing throughout, though these are well enough controlled to maintain clarity rather than cause confusion. The end result is an intriguing tragedy, which feels more like a collection of books, all held together by the overarching narrative and motifs.

In the first chapter entitled 'La légende de l'Inceste,' Péladan narrates the tale of a small, maverick planet, guilty of 'the greatest sin of all: incest.'⁴¹ He describes how after the Great Flood, Bené Satan (Satan himself has been transformed into the sun warming the planets) implored the Virgin Mary to intercede on behalf of himself and his children, the Oelohites. The Archangel Michael appears to tell him that his prayer has been answered, and that the Most-High has decreed that he and his sons and daughters will be spared, but exiled to an 'errant planet,' also inhabited by humans.

Antiquité Orientale, Égypte, Kaldée, Assyrie, Chine, Phénicie, Judée, Arabie, Inde, Perse, Aryas d'Asie Mineure (Paris: Mercure de France, 1908), pp. 35-39; Joséphin Péladan, "I. La légende de l'inceste; II. La reconnaissance oelohite," *La Décadence Latine, Ethopée: Istar*, vol 2 of 2 (Paris: Edinger, 1888), pp. 257-283; Ed. Bertholet, *La Pensée et les Secrets de Péladan*, 4 vols (Lausanne, Editions Rosicruciennes, 1952), IV, p. 65

41 Péladan, *Istar*, p. 257

At first eager, then apprehensive, Bené Satan watches as his sons and daughters begin to mature and long for love, and soon finds them trysting with human men and women, whom Péladan names Kalibans (in a deliberate reference to Shakespeare whom he read avidly as a teenager).⁴² In a dream, Bené Satan sees horrific visions of a race of archangels breeding monsters together with the ‘beastly’ inhabitants of the planet. He calls on Michael and asks for help: ‘they dare not marry their flame in incest, and love will mix the blood of the Kaliban [sic] with my blood. Sacrilege!’ Michael’s response and the ensuing dialogue are as follows:

– It is God’s design! Bené Satan! Your father wanted to be the Messiah; his demon’s heart was nothing other than a princely heart; he had beauty, genius; the only thing missing was charity and this is what confused everything. God left him his glory when punishing his crime; the soul of the false Jesus feeds the sun, shines upon the world, in the manifestation of his Word and the Laws. For you, Bené Satan, and your race, I know of one solution: That your sons and daughters should live their human life, without love, without embraces, that your hybrid race should not propagate itself, and so you will be received into the second atmosphere, always punished, but less humiliated.’

– You are joking Michael, the daemonic life is the life of love.’⁴³

Satan adamantly refuses Michael’s terms. On returning to his offspring, with a heavy heart he pairs them off among themselves, preferring the ‘ultimate’ sin of incest over intermarriage with humans or the extinction of his race. After emphasising the loneliness and thirst for love (not lust) experienced by the Oelohites, Péladan ends the chapter by launching into a curious and paradoxical series of acclamations:

Hail to the obstinate ones who do not drink drunkenness except from cups struck with the weapons of their own blood.

Hail to the vigilant ones (Watchers) who know the arcana and respect the way of idealism. These are the Oelohites, the daemons of light, who, militant and faithful to the work of God, choose sterility over the propagation of evil.

⁴² Aside from his other occult reading, in his late teens Péladan was ‘impassioned by theatre... he read Shakespeare, Etienne Jodelle, Corneille, Racine, Crébillon, Dumas, Hugo, Beaumarchais. The Romantics also attracted him : Byron, Sand, Schiller, Jean-Paul, Nerval. After reading Dickens and Walter Scott, he commented on the technique of the 19th century novelists and considered the genre to be dependent on drama.’ Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, p. 21, citing an unpublished note from the Péladan archive.

⁴³ *Istar*, p. 262

Kneel on the ground before the decrees of the Most High, and Glory to those who expect sublime incest.⁴⁴

This enigmatic finale is explained by a further excerpt from Péladan’s reinterpretation of *Genesis*. After spending much time discussing the qualities of masculine and feminine, active and passive principles as outlined earlier, essentially following Fabre d’Olivet with regard to the “universal principles” and their association with Noah and his sons, Péladan adds a new dimension to his exposition. The original Fall had been caused by Nahash encouraging the newly formed Adam and Aischa to seek self-awareness; promptly forbidden by Joah-Elohim. Péladan explains that this was on account of the creator angels, Satan among them, falling in love with their own creations:

I had once believed that Satan, on the one hand, keeper of mysteries, in coming into contact with humanity was moved by a senseless ambition: to intervene in the evolution of mortals and supersede the second divine personage... May Satan forgive me for attributing to him such a blasphemous plan... this prince of intelligence would never be obscured on this point, I am contrite and confused about my stupid explanation... No, Satan and his angels fell because of the mirage of their oeuvre; these artists of creation were seduced by their own handiwork...⁴⁵

This is followed by a retelling of the Fall as related in the *Book of Enoch* (*Enoch I*), but in contrast to the Biblical narration whereby the Flood destroyed all of the progeny of the union between humans and angels, drawing on early rabbinical sources, Péladan explains that this was necessary because the material world could not bear so much spiritual essence in its pure form, but nonetheless, the angelic seed survived among the descendants of these unions, as well as in the form of those Oelohites who, condemned to a life of celibacy and solitude, chose to remain on earth as teachers of men, and ultimately sowed the seed of creativity that would permit mankind to gradually evolve and reawaken to their divine potential by their own means. This potential and these teachings, Péladan believed, were most clearly expressed in the art forms of ancient civilisations, expressed in symbolic forms that clothed those Ideas that would permit a gradual reawakening through the alignment of intellect, spirit and will, as men and women respectively came to understand and manifest their potential. Since the Oelohites were not permitted to intervene directly, this blossoming of spirit could only be driven by human effort at self-realisation and self-redemption, and

⁴⁴ *Istar*, p. 266

⁴⁵ Péladan, *Comment on Devient Artiste*, pp. 21-2.

THE FENRIS WOLF

the Oelohites could only be redeemed if mankind achieved this.

Therefore, Péladan's "religion of art" was motivated not by delusions of grandeur, but by a Promethean urge to seek and share the path to self-redemption. His efforts were tuned not only to the awakening of his fellow men, but to the redemption of what he saw as his spiritual daemonic kin. He invoked their names frequently, in many often enigmatic prefaces to his books, and gave them roles in his novels and plays in an attempt to demonstrate their constant presence in human history:

The Bené-Oelohim were the sons of your will and I would like to believe that I am descended from them... True to the Bereschit [Genesis] and to the sepher [book] of Enoch, in the genius of a Plato, of a Dante, of a Wagner, I see a daimonic descent... [this is] the conflict of angelic nature enclosed within the human condition.

I believe, along with Pythagoras and Plato, that the genius is never a man, but a d[a]emon, that is to say, an intermediary being between the spiritual and the earthly hierarchy: and it would take a papal bull, ex cathedra, to change my opinion.

"The enchanters, the egregores of all times, of all lands, mages, saints, artists, poets, aristes, mystagogues, are all the obscured or shining offspring of angelic descent."⁴⁶

And, at least in Péladan's compassionate narrative, the daemon, or angel, who began it all, did so out of mercy, and not out of overarching pride, just as Péladan's "religion of art" was motivated not by delusions of grandeur, but by a Promethean urge to seek and share the path to self-redemption.

It is easy to misread Péladan, and during his lifetime he was sorely hard-done-by, dubbed "the Dreyfus of literature" by the periodical press of his time. 'No literary figure of the late nineteenth century had been more ridiculed, lampooned, and caricatured,' we are told by one biographer; and the majority of modern scholarly references and studies leave an impression of Péladan as an attention-seeking, arrogant and eccentric braggart, whose significance in the worlds of literature, art, or esotericism, was negligible. Yet this does not reflect the reality, and as noted earlier, there is much to commend his work which also commands attention by virtue of its sheer breadth, audacity, and originality of synthesis and conviction. In a recent biography of another occult figure whose true story is obscured by dark legends in the popular imagination, Aleister Crowley, author Tobias Churton pointedly asks:

46 J. Péladan, 'Arcanum of Lucifer, or of Birth,' Comment on Devient Artiste (Paris: Chamuel, 1894), pp. xiii, 41; citing *Istar*, (1887), p. 41.

LEGENDS OF THE FALL RETOLD

How are we to understand who Crowley really was, and what he really achieved, if, as we shall discover, the legend is largely a libel? Ask the man. He left us clues.⁴⁷

To discover Péladan's Luciferian visions and Orphic dreams, it is truly necessary to return to the source and ask the man himself, keeping in mind the symbolic nature of his expression. An introduction such as this may point the way and summarise the ideas underpinning his work, but it cannot encapsulate the "Idea" in the same way as Péladan's symbolic expression. The following excerpts are the first translations of Péladan's work into English, and have been selected to reflect the preceding discussion. Although they represent only a fraction of his oeuvre, they should nonetheless offer a fleeting glimpse into the forms he attempted to give to these monumentally complex questions, in his own attempt to clothe the Idea in Form.

ISTAR (1888)

THE LEGEND OF INCEST

In the Ether, where the giant stars circle, there was a small world – insubordinate to the Sun – a small, vagrant world.

The Ancients of Days and the Watchers know the sin of the planets.

The Sun, is the heart of Satan who burns without reviving his wife, Sina, frozen in punishment; but the smallest world committed the greatest sin: incest.

Here it is.

I

It is the Deluge! The wrath of God swallows Atlantis; the waters have covered everything, only the heights remain unsubmerged.⁴⁸

Bené Satan stands there, his sons and his daughters around him. Already the green flood is about to soak the edges of their tunics, foaming silver on the golden armlets of the women. Lightning crashes and swirls around these haughty ones whose pride did not demand grace, like a fearful executioner, holding back

47 Tobias Churton, *Aleister Crowley: The Biography. Spiritual Revolutionary, Romantic Explorer, Occult Master and Spy* (London: Watkins, 2011), p. 5.

48 Definition of Bamoth: heights, the forty-seventh station of the Israelites (Num.21:19,20) in the territory of the Moabites. "bamoth." Easton's 1897 *Bible Dictionary*. 28 May. 2012. <Dictionary.com: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/bamoth>>.

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and not daring to strike the sublime, guilty ones.

Yet, a terrifying cyclone is about to swallow the heights.

“Maria!” Satan said.

II

“Maria!” And the waterspout exploded in the distance.

“Maria!” And the flood moved away from the rock.

“Maria!” The thunder ceased baying.

“Maria!” The Ocean, immobile under the clearing sky.

After this fourfold invocation, he said: “Lord, I repent for my father’s sin; he was wicked to dare deny your Word and to attempt for himself that which only you can do; I humble myself before you, Lord, to save my family”.

And the son of Satan bent his beautiful knees: “Oh, you, who are conceived without sin, who conceived God, my forehead, which I have never bowed, salutes you! Future mother of the Saviour, save Bené Satan and his sons, who bow down to you seven thousand years before your birth. Avé, Maria!”

Then Michael appeared in dazzling glory:

“Your homage to the Virgin saves you, immensely guilty one, and the Most-High wishes to commute your damnation to exile on a vagrant world.”

And all of the Bené Satan were borne up by clouds; with feet of fire and revived hearts they landed on the wild crest of the small, vagrant world.

III

The son of the great, fallen one, orbited the planet and soon brought it to order. Then he rested; a child awoke:

“Father, there are earthlings there, along with us saved ones”.

“How hasty they are!”

As he slept again, a girl came to him:

“Father, I am moved, the earthlings are begging, they are servitors, slaves, and God has mixed them with us, he has had his will; this irritated him, this was wise, oh father!”

“That they may thus be supported.” And Satan slept with this merciful thought; but he dreamt an atrocious vision, that his daughters coupled with the Kalibans, birthed bastards, and that his lustful sons would scour the earthly lands for sensuality; and his race of archangels would be cross-bred with brutes

He gave such a cry of wrath and rage that returned appalling echoes from the sky. Awaking, his children ran to him.

“Go back to sleep, a dream haunted me, a detestable dream; he said faintly.

LEGENDS OF THE FALL RETOLD

Children, I shall watch over you; sleep is bad for my eagle eyes, but you must sleep in peace!”

IV

Night fell. Satan the dreamer strode majestically across the fields and the shores. Suddenly, he saw his favourite daughter Izél, teasing some oaf.

He snatched up a sapling and with a single blow felled the audacious youth.

Bené Satan’s daughter wept: “He spoke to me of love, this was sweetness, in killing him you have struck your daughter.”

Satan was silent, and continued on his way.

In the shelter under a rock, his son Rouna was stealing kisses at the breast of a female Kaliban.

Faced with his father’s wrath, the rebellious lover cried:

“Do you not know the past, and how since you fell from the sky you are a son, as am I, of a simple mortal, greedy for kisses, spasms, and giddiness? When you conceived me, it was in the nude, on the perfumed bed of Ereck. Why do you reproach others for your sin?”

Bené Satan was silent, and continued on his way. That night, he watched his race sleep. The adolescents writhed on their beds of ferns, fondling phantoms, and the virgins kissed their own flesh. The scent of love grew, and the father wept.

V

On the mountain he waited for dawn, and with the first ray of light he incanted: “Michael!”

And the archangel appeared.

“Oh, you who were my brother and whose intellect has not been obscured, counsel me. My admirable daughters are gasping with love and my sons resemble furious bulls.

They may not dare join their flames in incest, and love will mix the blood of the Kalibans with my blood! This is sacrilege!”

“It is God’s design! Bené Satan! Your father wanted to become the Messiah, his demon’s heart was no less than the heart of a prince; he had beauty, genius; but charity was lacking and everything was confounded. God left him his glory when punishing his crime: the soul of the false Jesus is the fuel of the sun, resplendent over the world, in his realisation of his Word and the Laws.

For you, Bené Satan, and for your race, I know only one solution: That your sons and your daughters must live out their human lives without love, without

kisses, your hybrid race must not reproduce, and so you will be received into the second atmosphere, still punished, but less humiliated.”

“You are joking Michael, the daimonic life is that of love.”

“All right then! Lower your pride, allow the Kalibans to approach your daughters and let the women of the earth conceive with your sons. Know that the good God, whose enviable role crushed the shoulders of the great, fallen one, wills that through the force of love, the brute will be elevated and that with understanding focused on the idiot, genius will penetrate their ignorance. Show solidarity forever, do the works of Christ, be faithful to the one who anticipates divine mercy. Come on! Bené Satan, your pride hears this beneficial advice dictated by the bonds of our common essence.

“Angel,” the rebel said, “I am outraged by both these tortures, whether to sterilise my race or to prostitute it to mortals, and to mix the star that once fell from the red firmament, with vile and filthy dust, and you can tell God that Satan does not want to do either.”

“Take care, angry spirit, there are no more words that can save you anew, only the name of the Madonna was able to change your destiny, and that only once.

Are the Arcana not known to you? Science alone suffices to confirm to you that no humanity can live in incest, and that God has willed it that the one will redeem the other, and that the great will extend their bounty to the small.”

Bené Satan crossed his arms across his chest:

“Then this is our last meeting, Michael, speak my damnation.”

“You will be reunited, mind and soul, with your damned father on the Sun, and your offspring will be thrown to earth, they will even forget the name and will of Satan. As they have chosen the path of incest, they will know no love except between themselves, and they will seek out their own blood.”

“How marvellous, so the word of God follows the Word of Satan.”

Michael exorcised the blasphemy by the sign of the cross:

“Poor, pitiful, arrogant Satan, you speak like a man; have you lost all celestial knowledge? As soon as this world, lost through your sin, rejects your offspring thrown on the earthly shores, they will find misfortune without respite. Scattered among a hostile human race, in a hundred years no brother will be able to find his sister: and your daughters will be trampled by the brutes, and your sons will forget themselves in red and heavy embraces; mixing your blood with earthly blood, it will be salvation... What should I say to God?”

“You can tell God that Satan does not want this.”

Bené Satan descended to the foot of the mountain, all his children were anxious, waiting, knowing very well that he brought an inescapable verdict, the terrible word he had demanded from the skies. He took the hands of the virgins.

“Oh my sons! Here are your wives.”

And he put them in the hands of their brothers.

“Oh my daughters” Here are your husbands.”

And, sacrilegiously, he blessed the sin that would conserve his race.

VI

Never had flesh burned so hot since the night of Ereck, when the two hundred celestials fell into mortal ecstasy that incestuous midnight.

The rustling of bodies sounded like wheat bending in the wind, and the groans of love emerging from their chests drowned out the clamour of the sea.

Sinister lights illuminated the seas, dancing on the edges of the rocks; then the flames appeared and the ground split open under the guilty palpitations.

So Satan, for one last time, blessed the mad incest. Tirelessly, furiously, conserving his race; this world cracked, scattering islands, demons, and humans, into the air.

In the ether, where the giant stars circle, there is a small world – insubordinate to the sun – a small, vagrant world.

The Ancients of days and the Watchers know the sin of the planets.

The Sun is the heart of Satan that burns without reviving his wife, Sina, frozen in punishment, but the smallest world committed the greatest sin: incest!

Here it is!

And since that time, with unearthly equality, love has mixed the poet with the chisel and the queen with the valet. The Oelohites, glorious sons of Satan, did not know how to close their hearts; hungry for love, thirsty for tenderness they flocked to the vulgar ones, and from puberty to the pale moment when death came to deliver them, the greatest hearts were taken into the coarsest hands, like fine birds in the hands of peasants.

Thus God wished the word of the elder insubordinate and arrogant one to follow the whole race: and Socrates, and Dürer and The Great Dante himself, damned to never receive sacrament, fornicated below them.

Bené Satan said to God: “I do not want this,” and his sons obeyed the will of a fool, his daughters the desires of a cad.

Lamentable sin, a more lamentable condemnation that imprisoned the great ones in the blackest of vessels, cloaked with indignity.

But there were Orphic deniers of base pleasures, who, fleeing from the Maenads, knew how to live for a name and die for a dream: Eurydice.

There are patient hearts that persist and search, conscious of their fate, the only joyful being. Hail to those haughty ones who, disdainful, look differently upon the dancing below them.

Hail to the obstinate ones who do not drink to intoxication except from cups stamped with the insignia of their rank.

Hail to the watchers, who know the arcana and respect the paths of ideals; these are the Oelohites, the daimons of light, who, for God's work, militant and faithful, prefer to be sterile rather than fertilized by evil.

Kneel on the earth before the decrees of the Most-High, and Glory to the aspirants of sublime incest!

II

THE OELOHITE RECONNAISSANCE

Sitting nobly on the divan amongst magnificent, creased silks, Istar held the incestuous pages of the novelist loosely in her hand; she wore a white cloth dress, and around her neck the leather necklace of Rabbi Ben Isdubar: and this simplicity, this colour worn by an elegant woman who had been so criticised for her love of bright colours, symbolised a state of mind fit for a bride.

M. Capimont would come to say that he had married her only to keep her for Nergal, and let them beatify themselves at the Gloriettes, this had gladdened, though not greatly surprised this woman, whose virgin heart beat as it had when she was twenty.

The Oriental woman believed in destiny, in the faith which Isocrates and Racine showed us in Helen and Iphigenia. Lucrezia Borgia, the princess defiled by Victor Hugo, offers a modern example of these great ones, resigned to historical life, who accept misfortune or fault with such royal disdain. Wicked though this conception was, she had lived with extraordinary souls since Sophocles, and we rediscover her today in these words of a very noble woman: "I was too tired to resist, and I found it less unpleasant to give in than to defend myself. Providence should not put us in these situations; it responds!"

Istar believed Nergal's words: that he could lie and hide ordinary desire behind brotherly hypocrisy, but her spirit didn't believe it for a minute.

Her state of mind as she waited was almost unspeakable, neither fearful of her duty, nor shaking her illusion. The Oriental fatalist had received this word of love like the host that was not of flesh. She did not reproach herself for trembling during the Brahms performance. The force of attraction that had crushed her in that moment, seemed to her like the force of Necessity would seem to a pagan. Her thought, if she had believed herself guilty, would have accused the gods, like a heroine of Euripides, or Malin in the manner of an attempted medievalist. Guilty? Certainly the word was stupefying and revolting; she had said to M. Capimont: "I would enjoy a fraternal afternoon with Nergal". What she would

hear and what she would reply she had said and heard before the universe itself. Only one sensation embarrassed her, that of being suddenly happy; and the joy made her resplendent like a blooming flower. Her skin, when she felt repulsion and humour, went grey, bristling slightly with chicken-bumps: the open heart, on the contrary, cleared the skin, smoothed it as it turned pale.

There is something of the vegetable nature in women, flourishes and torpors more beautiful to contemplate than the most marvellous sights. The dawn of the heart reflected in the eyes, the morning coquetries of the hand, full daylight ending in agitated throats, and those gentle twilight things, poses that unfurl, those dead and trailing arms like abandoned scarves.

Nergal had not yet been dazzled by these splendid mirages; Did Istar herself know it?

Childishly, as if she had already been waiting too long, she said: "We are seeking something that could be unpleasant, and the lover will find nothing. The beloved is never seen except through his love, and that prism recolours hell to look like heaven. To love is to still play with dolls, and just as the rich or poor child sees in the toy whatever they hold most precious, the soul in love clothes his beloved with all the splendours of his own dreams.

Had he been clairvoyant, Nergal would have been able to hold up against this examination, provided that bizarreness was admissible. To eyes accustomed to general respectability, he seemed a bit of an actor. As soon as he resembled those who resembled nothing more, his expressiveness imaginatively evoked a memory of the beautiful past; the world condemned him with a single adjective: "theatrical", or summarised all the drama in a word: "eighteen-thirty". To his critics Nergal appeared to have just emerged from the Pimodan hotel; his antique elegance and his unusual manner were always distracting, but unexpected and ornate, and despite his flexible humour, he tired quickly of the constant immediacy of people used to daily routines. Almost grandiose, flexible and with a shifting allure, earlier he had stiffened with inner thoughts, earlier he was expansive with an almost nervous tenderness, his countenance was inconstant, this glorious habit of always looking to himself like a Mérodack; a passion almost always sealed his words and his gestures, though less frequently, signifying an anxious, but haughty leniency.

Without his genius, he would be no more than a sentimental adventurer, and if a crown were to land on his head he would be less embarrassed than surprised; all major issues seemed simple and easy to him, but the details of life, the pebble that could overturn the chariot, he never saw, in this he was incomplete, ignorant or wanting to ignore defiance, opening his soul without care of treachery, and like Istar, he was Chaldean, going through life without joy; like a sacred cow, following the furrow marked with clogs, furious at this path, with a little white rage at having lost the great eagle's wings.

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He opened the door without knocking; Istar was resting in her pose of happy reverie, she stretched out her hand to Nergal; he, in a blue velvet jacket, quite resembled the character of Musset, the poet of Nights, who he played in costume that was half ordinary and half poetic. He bent over her extended hand and touched his lips. The skin returned the kiss.

In a voice veiled with emotion:

“This first hand-kiss will be the last, my brother.”

The novelist made a gesture in protest:

“The whole soul is yours.”

And as Nergal’s face grew sad:

“We no longer understand each other Nergal! When the sister is married, there is no more incest, there is adultery; and I don’t know any half-measures. It is, I tell you, the last hand-kiss.”

Nergal bowed, did not object, and took a low seat by Istar’s feet.

They looked at each other. For how long? Through which eyes?

With effort, shaking from this sweet magnetism:

“The... vertigo of Brahms, must be the last.”

In fact, the silent contemplation of each other had intoxicated them too much, and they talked so as not to hear their thoughts, putting out the sound of their heart with the sound of words. They were not, however, in vain.

“Since the greeting at Bellecour square,” began Istar, “I have nourished black defiance expressed as bitterness against you: however in these meetings so palely expressed where so little of my heart springs from my lips, faith has come to me. I now believe; I open a soul to you where almost nothing rebels. All that I am, I give to you, Nergal.”

“The most noble words that a being can say to another being: “To you, blindly.”

“Your light has forced the eyes of my prudence to shut. Your nobility has revealed itself to me, so evident, so solicitous, that I want to offer you an act of faith.

“Higher than sex, much beyond desire, there resides a religious sentimentality, we are two exemplars of it.

“Only you have seen, proclaimed my supernatural nature.

“Thus only you deserve me. Life has confronted us to late to conflate our two existences; we each respect each other’s destiny and carry it like a Eucharist, a balm and an aegis, you, my heart, I, am yours.”

A profound emotion muted the young man’s voice.

“Oh, my dear one, sad, but beautiful and faithful, always be the clearest mirror in which to see yourself. This is not Nergal, stronger than love, stronger than

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the life that you love; no more someone who descends to you, this is a prideful one who discovers that you are as high as him, and who loves his blood in your veins.

“Your hands are the most worthy, the most noble of this plaintive confession, there I place my dream.”

“It would be better,” she continued, “to feel the pain of betrayal and deception, than to feel the remorse for not having recognised the only being according to my heart.”

Both of them reached out their hands, and in another movement, pulled them back. The attraction to each other was so great that the slightest contact would have been a luxury.

“Oh! The contract granted by our hearts,” Nergal cried, “grander than that of kings, will make us live a masterpiece of sentiment above those of the spirit.”

“To cast without failure, that amphibian that ceaselessly spins and falls, is that not the work closest to the divine?!

“Love so great is nothing but an eagle, and this sky-leaper feeds itself in a vile way; our androgyny will anticipate the skies.”

“Grand exiles of the ether, we do not demand this false happiness from life, made of the vulgarity and vertigo that makes barbarians rejoice; our royalty will be our suffering desire. Let us place our hearts side by side, suffering with two souls...”

“My sister, whom obscure disasters have long removed from my tenderness, I have found you again, alas, married, and a mother. Let us accept what life has poorly done, it is for the Oelohites to carefully accomplish their duty to mortals. Only the free have the right to sacrifice themselves...”

“On the sea of life, each one is the harbour of the other...”

“Oh! All that I have given of my heart to the tiny ones in need of love, I regret; and yet, I have not wronged you, even in ignoring you.

“Spasms, words, beyond the gravity of the sun, elbow upon elbow in the indefinite climb that leaves time behind, always sad and incomplete, to extend into eternity.”

“Yes,” Istar cried, “with you I tremble higher than in fiction.”

“Higher than in fiction you say; so there is yet a fair Providence. My artist’s dream, you have realised it.

“Hail, Diotima, seraphic Jioconda! It is your heart that pushes mine and raises it...”

“I believe in you, Istar, like in the sun...”

And he stood up, eager and handsome like an ancient incanter.

She closed her eyes, clenched the fabrics in her hands; her beating throat the only answer.

“You are silent, Istar; by what magic does your silence prevail in every word and how can I see your soul living the most intense marvels in your stillness? I am assisting, a distraught spectator, in this divine comedy that is playing itself out in you for me alone. Oh the delicacy of your contemplation!”

He continued:

“The sentiment that silences me is royal and worthy of its object, since it is substantiated by this sight, recovered. You see, this is a thousand times more gentle to have, than anything else.

“This hold that you unconsciously have over me, is greater than sexual attraction, goddess, and not by perfections, goddess with the force of humanity. By my comparative analysis as a savant and bon viveur, you do so well alone that I would like to inspire in you the religion of yourself.

“Be proud, you are the most womanly of women. Oh! How proud I am of my sister...”

“Devote yourself, soul and spirit, like you do your body. I would have you so infatuated that your foot would believe itself profaned were it to touch the ground.

“If your ascent distances you from me, it doesn’t matter: I will have exalted you!

“Let me be the one to climb the path of the stars; when you are blasphemed by life and unknown to the world, look you to Nergal to find your pride again.

“Noble falcon, rest a moment on my hand, before flying for our planetary sisters.

“Good companion of the ideal path, I offer my heart for you to try your wings: I want you great, greater than mine.

“Climb, climb, climb, even climb on me!”

Istar stood up in turn, and as she did so she stood almost directly opposite Nergal. Interrupting his eruption of tenderness, she turned towards a Madonna, whose height overshadowed the other statuettes.

“Holy Virgin! My spirit, my soul, and my body resonate with him! I belong to him, I am his into eternity!”

“Into eternity,” the young man repeated. “Sublime words! That she may rise to the ears of the angels, who will help me to accomplish it in us both.”

“I have just seen a reflection of God and you are no longer yourself, but you are a flame, and immortal; Love, like a Holy Spirit, has descended onto the beauty of your body and made it divine. Love has descended into the beauty of your heart to sublimate it.”

After a palpable silence, Istar said:

“Oh! The splendour that is possible in our serene radiance, climbing into the blue, and my repose in joy.

“Yesterday I contemplated the dull movement of the Rhone, similar to the vain flow of human existence.

“A reddish glow, alone in the shadow of the river, and I saluted it in your name. Far away, some lamp scintillated, like my thoughts about the vanity of life radiating towards you.”

“Oh, be so!” Nergal cried. “A driver of the nave that carries you, I will watch, gloriously, instead of sleeping, sadly on my deck, an Argonaut without faith.

“The flood of ages and of peoples have brought us to each other, you, great Istar, and I am the pontiff of hearts.

That this same flood, in its reflux, brought us together – before God it is salvation – before life, grandeur.

Oh, give me your hand for immortality.”

“I believe in you Nergal, and you work miracles upon me. Only! Oh my brother, I am climbing thoughtlessly onto the pedestal that you are offering me: it would be terrible to fall from it.”

“In time, perhaps you will discover pettiness in me. I let myself be called Daughter of Gods, what will happen if I style myself Daughter of Eve? With what violence then, destroying the work of your hands, will you trample the poor idol with feet of clay, but a heart of flesh....

“This fear prevents me from abandoning my heart to the gentle seductions of your words...”

“I’ll never be harsh with you, Istar, you will always find me as it pleases you for me to be, and without ever remembering the clouds that you will dissipate, you who have gathered them.

“Only, my perpetual gentleness is not the noble part that you deserve: remember that I have elevated you supremely within my spirit; do not descend from that throne; the brother cannot be lost, but the admirer... I will always extend the same hand to you, but if I do not see you with the same eyes, it would be sad for your glory and for my heart.”

“If you always see me with your heart I will never deceive you Nergal; there, everything is still pure and simultaneously, ablaze. For my part, let me doubt you a little, and ask whether you will keep your heart for Istar – beyond the other women whom I foresee and whom I accept; since I am no more than the sister: is a constant heart sufficient to secure yours?”

Nergal cried out again:

“There is only one constant intoxication in life, that is the security in the possession of another; an absolute security that nothing can deny... I have been searching for this like an alchemist seeks perfection.”

“My work can bring pleasure to others; but to me, it is better to be able to say: “by my side, or at the end of the world, there is someone who only hears the

Mass of my thoughts, for whom my indifference would be a bolt of lightning, who at my signal would respond to my desire and in dying would regret losing nothing in the world but me.”

“Having met me, is this the projection you have made, my brother? But what bitterness our adventure holds: I have given my life to see you; and yet I am frightened of what we are both going to suffer. One can resign oneself to misfortune when happiness is out of sight; but to touch it, and yet not take it...”

“The myrrh and the laurel are bitter: love and glory are spasms, but the spasm is the beginning of ascent. Wear high and proud this closed crown that I have given you, an invisible helmet of a worldly Clorinde.

Grand words from a brother such as I to a sister such as you:

I am your living conscience, sometimes troubled, always sincere; and I do not consider events, but your soul! May your pride, comforted by my solicitude, increase, oh princess!”

“Why do you call me princess?”

“Because you are my sister; and you belong to a race whose breastbone covers a heart worthy of a crown.”

“Your legend of incest speaks the truth.”

“The sons of Prospero and Ariel are searching for each other among the swarm of Bené-Caliban.

“Ah! You strike me with such admiration – Nergal; a man whose love can smooth over such weaknesses.

... Would you bless me...”

“I bless you, my sister, with a benediction more august than that of any priest, because my hand may shake, but it holds firm in its action.”

Collecting herself briefly, she lay down, and in a deep voice, intoned:

“Children of the Orient, let us exchange an eternal pledge of faith. Give me the jewel of fire that shines at your neck, and take this leather necklace, a relic of my nourishing father, Rabbi Ben Isdubar, who brought me in his mantle from the far reaches of Bactria.”

She unfastened it and handed it to him with a solemnity that Nergal imitated in presenting her with the pentagram from around his neck.

“King Solomon made the same gift to the queen of Sheba. It is the sign of the spirit that rules over the four elements, the most powerful of all symbols after that of the cross.”

They stopped looking at each other to examine the items: he, the leather necklace; she, the star of fire with five diamond points.

Suddenly Nergal stood up.

“Sister, did you know that there is writing on this?”

“Alas!” she said, “my misfortune. There is...”

“It is a little naïve of me to ask you... Who can decode this? Fewer than twenty living people.”

“M. Capimont is the twenty-first.”

“Him? Don’t make fun... these are hieroglyphs of the Hebrew zodiac with numerical points; no linguist has heard of them. If M. Capimont can read this – he would be a mage!”

“If he hadn’t read it, I wouldn’t be married to him: Rabbi Ben Isdubar made me swear that only the Oedipus who could solve this enigma would become my husband.”

“Infamy” cried Nergal, shaking the necklace, “it is a combination of XIII and the sephiroth. Do not tell me Capimont’s version. Here is mine;” and collecting himself, he spoke in a deep voice. Istar gazed at him, her whole body leaning forward, unspeakably anxious.

“Here,” he said, “and without errors, the inscription on the necklace:

I am Kether, the admirable Tiphareth in Malkuth. Geburah guards me: no other Netzach than Hod before me, no other Hod than Yesod. Chokmah destines me to the supreme Chesed of Binah – Ishtar, Sara de Sour, I.”

He then translated the sephiroth:

“I am the Crown. For I am the Beauty of Forms.

The Hierarchy defends me; one cannot triumph over me except through the Spirit.

I obey none except the Mage of the supreme Arcade.

Eternal wisdom has destined me to console Genius.

I, Istar, queen of Heaven.”

Such a stupor came over the unfortunate woman that Nergal was frightened. Haggard, passing her hands over her forehead, as if to part the veils obscuring her understanding.

“Good God, Istar, what a strange illness! Are you in pain?”

“No... Listen to me, my brother,... do as I say.” Reaching out her hand:

“There, at that desk, write down what you have read on the necklace... Do not interrogate me... Do not look at me... Ah! Just this once, let me be despotic; I must.”

Nergal sat at the ebony desk.

“Would you like me to restore the hieroglyphs to modern Hebrew?”

“Yes, yes, that’s it: the version on the side, the two versions ... that you read to me.”

With one hand, she pressed her forehead, with the other, she pressed on her heart, for the long moment that the writing lasted, because Nergal, conscious that he was writing out a death warrant, took care despite his fervour.

“I have obeyed you,” he said finally, and with one knee on the ground, pre-

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sented it to her. She took it with one hand, crumpling it almost brutally as she touched it, and raised him to his feet. Fatefully, unconsciously, she walked towards the red curtain, and then stopped, lost in thought. Nergal, almost frightened, followed her every move. The most foolish ideas were crossing his mind. M. Capimont, a liar, for love! Istar had believed that she was fulfilling her destiny by accepting him as a husband!

The translation of a few signs had reversed the whole lives of four people. If he had foreseen the frightful effect of this revelation, he would have swallowed the truth rather than speak it.

In the interconnections of his impressions, the man of letters, used to seeing things in literary terms, as an actor, through his pain, he perceived more effects, he was still dizzy from the ornate magnitude that the adventure hid; he could perceive the lyricism in these moments, while the living admired this beautiful chapter of life.

With a regal gesture Istar pulled aside the red curtain. From the lock she took a small golden key, which she placed in her corsage with the version of the necklace. Then, she turned to her brother, with a voice soft with tenderness and pain; with a voice so loving that nothing could withstand it; with a voice that says to the beloved a supreme: "come":

She murmured:

"Go, Nergal, my brother, my master, my king. Go..."

He obeyed; and, hardly had the door shut behind him, than Mme Capimont, with determination, stifled a cry and fell fainting on the red settee, from where nobody in the world could ever raise her.

III

THE PANGS OF MEMORY

"If virtue consists in resistance, women are greater than us," and so said the author of Don Juanisme, expressing the moral code for women.

From boarding school where spontaneity is reprimanded, to the salon where again, games of wordplay and double meanings are forbidden to her, the modern woman obeys negative commandments.

To wait, to refuse, to retreat and to be silent, there is the entire expected behaviour: and society which is more selfish than anyone, because it is made of general selfishness, overwrites the individualism of souls as if with a State decree.

Here is an instructive example to serve as the proof of universal stupidity; scientific progress has not made the walls oscillate. Opinion, in our time, where the nervous system has begun to be understood a little more, sees nothing stupid

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in condemning two beings to the same bed for their whole lives, even when they have had no other physical contact beyond hands touching through gloves.

"My son is an honest man," says the serene mother as she hears her daughter, tomorrow a woman, entering the house.

There are indeed good moral qualities to be found in palpation; it is not with righteousness or honour that one touches; but with skin, and where there is repulsion, there is suffering.

Do women have a superior nature? Then, they are martyrs.

Now this was a martyrdom Istar had lived through: everything that is not consensual turns to rape, and Capimont, despite his immense love, produced in her a frightful nausea. Imagine a rose condemned to the slime of the most adoring of slugs; instead of softening the horror, the enthusiasm in this matter aggravates anything. Very few men are voluptuously attractive, and the damage is not lessened if palpation is not preceded and followed by caresses. Anyone who has heard women's confessions knows all too well that total possession that is stripped of preliminaries and contexts is mostly that that frightens them the least.⁴⁹ The torture of Istar was atrociously complicated by Capimont's naïve good faith, always hoping to animate the statue, and to overwhelm her with his grabbing caresses of the Beloved, of an infernal disgust sustained by unattractiveness.

She should have denied him her lips on a nervous pretext, then refused his own: she underwent repulsive contacts almost twenty years ago, and suddenly a kiss on her hand almost caused her convulsions.

He brought her to a cataclysmic point: there was a kind of pleasure, and the being that contained this intoxication, she had the courage to depart from her flesh that had suffered enough.

Only on that evening did she not pray; her pride whispered that with this renouncement she adorned the earth: for a few hours she experienced this intoxication of the victory over herself, the highest one of all because you confront the face of God himself.

Before going to sleep she upended all the shelves, searching for a old issue of the Revue where Nergal's name had appeared to her for the first time. When her husband came in with a visible desire to enjoy her:

"I am tired, dearest," she said, "let me finish my reading and rest."

Leaning over to kiss her goodnight, Capimont read the title: *Marche sentimentale*.

⁴⁹ See *La Décadence Latine I. Le Vice Supreme*. Pp. 42 & 43. (Author's note).

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IV

SENTIMENTAL WALK

On a lost path where the mandrakes sing, I wanted to spend the night – their naked feet disturbed the ferns – unreal beings!

They gave their name in a plaintive voice:

“Oh Sina!”

“Cyllene, hé!”

“Vo, Kypris!”

“Orphéa, hé!”

And the four phantoms often turned their heads towards a young black man following in prayer.

Sina was dressed in a long ray of moonlight, leaving a trail of silver in her wake, nonchalant and her hands full of swooning flowers.

Fevered Cyllene had a forehead pleated by an artist in search of work, and her hands waved spectral paintbrushes.

Skipping Kypris, flirting with the night, gifting swarms of glances and smiles.

Orphéa, her blonde mane a golden helmet, gazed at a brilliant, fixed point in the sky: immortal songs spinning on her lips.

Sina hummed:

“Floating and creeping ivy drags on bare soil, wandering, disoriented sweetheart, unquiet vagabond seeking rest, my soul is searching for a great soul to give itself to; my slender waist, a strong arm to hold me; my changing eyes, loyal eyes to admire.

So where is the sunlight of love hiding? Who will warm me with intimate words and kiss my sulky lips.

Appear to me, oh my Eros! Before my long wait, appear, master! Before my prostrated tenderness.

Bring your shoulder to my tired head, wrap your arms around my weakened waist that I may finally sleep, a happy rest on your noble and fiery breast where sentiment, once born, flowers always the same, and always pure.

My sisters, after your efforts, do you see a dawning, you who march for art, for glory and for the kiss?

My heart, for me, alas, hopes for nothing.

“Cyllene, hé – Vo Kypris! - Orphéa, hé!”

Cyllene hastily spat out her words:

“I want! I want! I want!”

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When I called for tender love, I was deceived every time, and my brothers who could have cherished me are far away.

I will not weaken; the basilisk of my pride hisses and watches, around my kidneys decorated with the girdle of Venus. Nobody was worthy enough to remove my girdle, and I buried a dagger in my throat, renouncing the destiny of women, Hermes, my father, gave me hermaphroditic tendencies and the divine Helios was favourable.”

Transformed into an artist, the beloved severed herself from kisses, and walked with a road of virility and immortality with a proud step.

Voluntarily sterile, I increased my desire for chimeras. Fecund of spirit and with a closed lap, I applied Plato's serene words, a mystical androgyne enamoured of beautiful work.

Following my lead, cease your vain tears, Work my sisters, because your heart will not sense anything coming, alas.

Oh Sina! - Vo Kypris! - Orphéa, hé!”

Kypris murmured, cooing:

“Adonis is not dead; the kiss of his breath reaches me on the breezes, and at the spring a little of his reflection trembles; he passes by there, I tell you, we will join him before the opaline dawn.

My moaning languor that does not want to heal cherishes the untiring hope, dreaming of the tardy Beloved who with one embrace will erase even the memory of waiting.

My duty with each step is to adorn the earth with a soft beat of the soul.

I am the living ideal of the forms that you are seeking, Cyllene, and my noble patience, sister to your own, Sina, does not brood on the fever of the Orphics.

To wait for love, oh sisters! I look at myself and my heart smiles with my charms, if no-one else is to enjoy them.

Hé! Sina! - Cyllene, hé! - Orphéa, hé!

Orphéa sang, ecstatically:

“Glory, oh Cyllene, is the balm that heals the breathless wounds of love.

“Yes, glory, oh Sina, is a radiance which dissolves the shade of isolation forever, and which on the illuminated front, the Hero's lamp, will bring us to Leandre.

“Glory, oh Kypris! Is a gem that adorns beauty itself. If our too haughty hearts have not been able to find a master, let us make a potent destiny for ourselves. Love eludes us; we follow enthusiasm, if we have not been able to admire a mortal, let us make ourselves admirable and return to God our hearts that have been deceived on earth.”

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Under the laurels, one day perhaps an unknown joy waited for the androgynes, under the myrtles, Kypris, and Sina, under the willows.

“My sisters, have you felt anything coming?
Oh Sina! - Cyllene, hé! - O Kypris?”

The apparitions marched towards the dawn; and when the cock crowed I saw them stopped in a clearing where the paths formed a cross.

“We should go our separate ways, my sisters,” said the young black man.
“Adar! We are thirsty for love.”
“Adar! We are hungry for mystery.”
“Adar! We are afraid of the day.”
“Adar! We are cold of heart.”
“Weep, for comfort.”

The black youth struck the eyes of the travellers: their tears fell heavy and glistening. Then he raised the vase of lead as a chalice, and, a miracle! Vermillion blood, royal blood bubbled to the suddenly sparkling edges.

Soon the four sisters knelt as Adar spoke in a solemn voice; he seemed like a chaplain performing Mass.

“Thus you, Clement father, through your son, our God, we entreat you to bless this bitter sacrifice, a devotion of humility.

Instead of the luciferian diamond, our chalice is of base lead, and I, Bené Satan, instead of solar vestments, wear the funeral habit of fatalism. Denied holy communion forever, our obstinacy maintains our audacity, similar to the excommunicated who must pray before the portals of churches.

We want to take communion, and under the only species allowed in our damnation; my Word for the host, for wine the tears of these women, queens of hell, demon angels who carry for life the regret of peaceful skies.

The pain of my thoughts mixes with these tears that we drink for salvation.

Purification of the man who appeases the wrath of the Father.

Purification of the androgyne who appeases the wrath of the Son.

Purification for the demon who appeases the wrath of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I am unworthy to drink your precious blood, here I heal the lesions of sin with the water of pain.

He leant the chalice four times towards attentive lips, saying:

“Tears of the passions, wash us for eternal life.”

Having blessed the roads four times, Adar kissed each forehead. Sighing, the sisters lingered, hand in hand.

“Adar, walk with us; with the four of us.”

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But the young black man shook his head sadly.

“If you are together, you will not suffer, and I, a lost Saturnian, am condemned to solitude.”

“O Sina! - Cyllene, hé! - Vo Kypris! - Orphéa hé!”

In the clearing all was silent after that, and when the last star died in the opaline sky, the spectres disappeared.

I constantly see them, in spirit, those four phantoms passing, turning their tired heads towards a young black man who follows them in prayer.

Long have I travelled, a nocturnal pilgrim, the most deserted trails, my eye has seen the moon dissolve, but on the calm autumn nights, I can hear a faint echo.

“O Sina! - Kyllene, hé! - Vo Kypris! - Orphéa hé!”

Are those the damned ones, or is it the purgatory of penitent souls? But when I saw them, didn't I cross myself?

These seekers of love, Sina the languorous one, Cyllene demanding an expression of Art; Kypris, the sad turtledove; and the one from Cithaeron with feverish accents, they seemed to me, when I dreamed of them, like august demons, followed by a melancholy almoner and fatalist priest.

Sina wore a long ray of moonlight, leaving a trail of silver in her wake, nonchalant and her hands full of swooning flowers.

Fevered Cyllene had a forehead pleated by an artist in search of work, and her hands waved spectral paintbrushes.

Skipping Kypris, flirting with the night, gifting swarms of glances and smiles.

Orphéa, her blonde mane a golden helmet, gazed at a brilliant, fixed point in the sky: immortal songs spinning on her lips.

On a lost pathway where the mandrakes sing, I wanted to spend the night – their naked feet disturbed the ferns – unreal beings!

They gave their names in a plaintive voice:

“Oh Sina!”

“Cyllene, hé!”

“Vo, Kypris!”

“Orphéa, hé!”

THE FENRIS WOLF

COMMENT ON DEVIENT ARTISTE (ARISTE), 1894, PP. XI-XIII.

TO THE DEVIL

By the lowest of names they have inflicted on you: Satan, Lucifer, – Demon, Devil, I salute you with my pity. How art thou fallen, Lucifer? Regardless of your crime, it is not of those that man can judge. Regardless of your damnation, it is not something that man can conceive. Whatever you have become by your sin, you were the most perfect of created spirits: and that is enough for me, respecting your ancient brilliance, to approach you with compassion.

Having suffered more insult in my petty sphere than anyone else of this century, I have sometimes dreamed of clearing the mountain of calumny that humanity has heaped on your name; and three lines from the Areopagite have sufficed to render your figure guilty, moving me to pity without frightening me.

In plain terms, we send to the devil what bores us; in sacred terms, alas! We attribute to the Demon all of human malice.

Oh! Why have you paid, through the centuries, the sad price of unworthy humanity? It has been said that you push the assassin's hand: do you also push armies? It has been said that you pour all poisons: so you inspire Gréard⁵⁰ and all the teachers of atheism.

Ah! Poor Lucifer, man has attributed to you, through his villainy, all his stupidity.

It is you who speaks through tables, it is you who commands all the crooks of spiritism. Father Ventura⁵¹ has said that no magnetist can work without you, and the abbé Le Canu⁵² has written your history, and that of the war that you have made against God (sic) and man.

50 Octave Gréard, 1828-1904, responsible for reforming the French (secular) educational system in the mid- to late- nineteenth century. See: P. Bourgain, *Gréard, un moraliste éducateur* (Paris: Hachette, 1907).

51 Gioacchino Ventura di Raulica (1792-1861), a Jesuit priest and philosopher, who held that the existence of the devil was a necessary foundation for Church dogma. Cited and commentated in H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings, Volume IX*, 1888, (Quest Books, 1966), p. 18.

52 Auguste François Le Canu (1803-1884), ordained in 1826, he held a variety of ecclesiastical positions and rose in the ranks of the clergy. An ecclesiastic historian, he wrote extensive church histories whose main purpose was to strengthen Catholic faith. His strong interest in occultism became apparent with the publication of his *Dictionnaire des prophéties et des miracles* (1852); *Les Sibylles et les livres sibyllins, étude historique et littéraire* (1856); and the book to which Péladan is no doubt referring to here: *Histoire de Satan* (1861), in which he attempted to demonstrate incontrovertible proof for the existence of the devil. The book became highly controversial and was censored and destroyed in the same year as publication, but a few copies survived. See: François Laplanche : article « Auguste François Lecanu », in Jean-Marie Mayeur (ed.), *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine*, vol. 9 : Les sciences religieuses: le XIXe siècle: 1800-1914 (Paris: éd. Beauchesne, 1996) p. 400-401.

LEGENDS OF THE FALL RETOLD

So obscured are you in your principality of spirits, that you have managed to deceive yourself and lose yourself, but you have not deceived yourself about your Creator. The rage of the insult, in touching you, goes so far as to blaspheme against God.

When Christianity was founded on pagan ruins, there was such a habit of pantheist thought, and a conception of spiritomorphism of nature, that the first Fathers with great urgency, attributed to devilry every superstition that was too hard to explain, and you inherited a discredited paganism; the lyricism and comedy of the middle ages drew you into a caricature. But the brutish villains conceived the idea of an evil God and you had scoundrels, crime, and ignorance for your faithful, you, ancient prince of spirits.

Now you are forgotten: science, little by little, is discovering illness where for four hundred years they had seen your claws.

And I, a lucid Platonist and fervent Catholic, I visit you in my thoughts, as it is said in the works of mercy, imprisoned spirit, punished spirit; and as I feel the daemonic blood palpitate within me, I try to clean your face of the mud that human wickedness has thrown there.

If you are nothing but a villain deprived of all intelligence, I do not fear you: what is a spirit that has become an idiot, is it wicked? If you are, as I believe, a great sinner, but lucid in your atonement, then receive the consolation of my thought and the refreshment of my charity.

Humanity is that son of Noah who turned away in derision from their father's decline; I am Shem, I respect you in your misfortune, as I admire you in the splendour of your origins.

The Bené-Oelohim were the sons of your will and I would like to believe that I am descended from them, this one here, who is seen as the confused élan of the most humble, to the grandest, and to the most unlucky of the same race.

COMMENT ON DEVIENT ARTISTE, P. 41.

ARCANUM OF LUCIFER, OR OF BIRTH

Before the horned, clawed, terrible devil of the medieval imagination, the smile of St. John and the Vanity of Leonardo [da Vinci] suffice.

But I am doing more than rejecting the grotesque from religion as from aesthetics: because in this, each individual conceives of God and the devil, in their own image.

I deny demonology as it is taught in the seminaries... and I deny it, based on my faith in a Greek, and Orthodox too: my authority, oh naïve curates, is His

THE FENRIS WOLF

Majesty Saint Dionysius the Areopagite.⁵³ “Absolute evil does not exist; evil is an accident of goodness.”

Demons are not essentially evil, they have lost angelic goodness, but they maintain their natural forces.

Were they evil to themselves, they would corrupt themselves. If they are evil for others, then who do they corrupt?

Substance, power, or operations: they corrupt that which is susceptible to corruption.

THEN, EVIL IS NOT THERE FOR EVERYTHING AND IN EVERYTHING, they weakened in upholding their principle, they forsook divine goodness in habit and operation: they were named evil, due to the debilitation of their natural function.

Evil is not among the demons in the form of evil, but as a defect and lack of perfection in their attributes.

Finally, [according to] St. Thomas Aquinas:

The demon wants to obtain this similarity with God that comes from grace by virtue of its nature, and not with divine help.

That the ignorant Sulpicians should struggle against St. Dionysus and St. Thomas. These Fathers of the Church authorise me to pity those who are cursed to bear the load of human sin, an easy and ridiculous way to flatter mankind; I have never seen in my sins, or in those of others, any other explanatory necessity beyond the malice of the individual.

Onto this serious and healthy notion of the demon, [as] obscured angels, I have grafted the occult idea of involution and evolution; there are here below two series: beings who, born of the earth, tend to rise, and others, born of the spirit, for whom earthly life is a fall and an expiation of some mysterious crime of the beyond.

True to the Bereschit [*Genesis*] and to the sepher of Enoch, in the genius of a Plato, of a Dante, of a Wagner, I see a daimonic descent: psychologically I find them in the intimacy of a Litz, of a d’Aureville, to note personalities I have penetrated, [this is] the conflict of angelic nature enclosed within the human condition.

I believe, along with Pythagoras and Plato, that the genius is never a man, but a demon, that is to say, an intermediary being between the spiritual and

⁵³ Here Péladan, like others before him, is conflating Dionysius the Areopagite, an early Christian convert, with Pseudo-Dionysius of the 5th or 6th century CE. See: Rorem, Paul. *Pseudo-Dionysius: A commentary on the texts and an introduction to their influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rorem, Paul and John C. Lamoreaux, ‘John of Scythopolis on Apollinarian Christology and the Pseudo-Areopagite’s True Identity’ *Church History*, 62,4 (1993), 469–482.

LEGENDS OF THE FALL RETOLD

the earthly hierarchy: and it would take a papal bull, *ex cathedra*, to change my opinion.

The enchanters, the egregores of all times, of all lands, mages, saints, artists, poets, aristes, mystagogues, are all the obscured or shining offspring of angelic descent. (*Istar*, p. 41, 1887).

COMMENT ON DEVIENT FÉE, PP. 2-3

TO THE GRANDMOTHERS

I have manifested your glory, oh Ereckian;⁵⁴ by virtue of my art, Latin thought has leapt at the thought of your mysterious adventure. Oh Daimons, I have proclaimed and defended your precedence, I have thought of it night and day, behold how I raise the second enclosure and the second terrace: the Amphitheatre of Dead Sciences.

As a poet, I have spoken of the night of love when two hundred angels fell into the ecstatic mortal bosom.

I have shone the light on you, Satan, great and guilty one. That your heart – daimonic race, race of the tiara and the lyre, supports my effort for it to beat faithfully. That your heart – filled with such temerity – should counsel, comfort, and enlighten me. The church has pronounced upon you, daimons, words of nothingness, words that kill and bury you.

But see how the blood of Jesus has coursed on the Luciferian diamond, and by the crucified Almighty, by the name and the sign that will save the world: in the name of the Grail, you condemned angel, you spirit weeping with repentance, rise up and march, convert or confound mortals who are stuck in reality.

I have done the work of restoration; and as I have dispersed the vain phantoms who obscured the clear star of magic, I have ruined the temple of Woman with this work – and through me several spirits will see God – so that he is forgiven by my race.

And you, sublime bull, symbol of powerful thought! Stand on the threshold of this truly masculine work!

Spirit of earth, remember yourself!

Spirit of sky, remember yourself!

⁵⁴ Ereck = Uruk, ancient city of Sumer excavated during Péladan’s lifetime, from where he draws a large amount of the symbolism featured in his work.

See more of The Legends of the Fall on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of The Legends of the Fall on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account?Â Opening weekend in Texas is right around the corner, weâ€™re ready for our @slicktrickbroadheads to be put to use!! The Legends of the Fall is in Alberta. 13 September at 16:58 Â. His books include Legends of the Fall, Dalva, and Returning to Earth. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and winner of a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Spirit of the West Award from the Mountain and Plains Booksellers Association, his work was published in twenty-seven languages.Â Giving up everything he is last seen in an out of the way place in Florida cooking for a restaurant and dancing in the evening, content at last with his life. This novella gave me much to think about and I can recommend reading it without reservation. The third and final novella, Legends of the Fall, follows a family in Montana over a generation. The three sons are sent off to war in Europe, the youngest soon returning dead, the oldest injured. Critic Reviews for Legends of the Fall. In general, director Edward Zwick does a commendable job of keeping things apace, while John Toll's scrumptiously pristine cinematography and James Horner's piercingly full score.Â What a magnificent piece of old tosh Legends of the Fall is: playing extremely close to a genius pastiche of the melodrama genre. December 2, 2018 | Rating: 3/5 | Full Reviewâ€| PJ Nabarro. "Legends of the Fall" is the kind of movie where you have to make a conscious effort to keep the words "Big Sky Country" out of the first paragraph of the review.Â "Legends of the Fall" is not a Serious Movie, despite the profound sentiments of its narration and the classical ironies of its plot. It is a high-class horse opera - emphasis on opera, with an abundance of operatic coincidences, passions, loves, losses, overwrought arias and heart-wrenching soliloquies. â€“ Legends of the Fall (1994). Youâ€™ve caught me in a rather nostalgic mood, dear readers, but donâ€™t let that frighten you. The following words may read as schmaltzy, but please know it is not my intention to pour sugar upon the past and insist that you eat it up. I donâ€™t wish to burden you with cavities from the past, and with an expression that dire, at least youâ€™re aware that my saccharine soliloquies can only go so far. Everything that follows comes from a warm place that I tend to drift away from as a writer, succumbing to the 140-characters-or-less train of thought and the need to bite dow