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ART AND ANARCHY IN THE TIME OF  
SYMBOLISM

*Mallarmé and His Literary Group*

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*The best literature is a form of propaganda by the deed.*

Pierre Quillard, 'L'Anarchie par la littérature', *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, April 1892

*There is no need to be an anarchist as long as one can write.*

Mallarmé, according to Henri de Régnier, *Cahiers inédits*

As Jacques Rancière recalls in *The Politics of the Poets*, there are two principal ways of conceiving the relation between literary and public affairs.<sup>1</sup> At the ideological level, in the broadest and most neutral sense of the term, we could concern ourselves with the *politics of the writer* by describing their opinions and their activities within society. In a manner at once more semiological and more philosophical, we could also seek to define what a *politics of writing* could be.<sup>2</sup> In this case, it would be a matter of showing how an aesthetics can be a politics; how “literature does politics as literature”.<sup>3</sup> It is within this framework that Rancière situates himself with respect to his concept of the “distribution of the sensible”, a concept elaborated in the wake of Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. For the author of *Proletarian Nights*, aesthetics is not a theory of art but a thought of the configuration of the sensible that institutes a community. Now, what must be emphasized here is that this conception of a community of sense seems to come, in part, from a certain reading of Mallarmé, an author Rancière has a particular fondness for and to whom he has devoted articles<sup>4</sup> as well as a short but dense monograph: *The Politics of the Siren* (1996). Indeed, there is without a doubt a thought of the community in Mallarmé. Let us stress, first of all, that this has only recently been acknowledged by critics; moreover, it remains poorly disseminated in the public sphere, though it marks an important point of

renewal in Mallarmé studies. This image of a new Mallarmé, freed from the paradigm of intransitivity and self-referentiality, marks a significant rupture with the idealist and aestheticist reading of Thibaudet, as well as with Valéry's reformulation of the Master's poetics, which had a staunchly formalist and rationalist bent. It also breaks with Sartre's reading, which made Mallarmé the great solipsistic poet who had severed literature from the instrumental language without which no engagement was possible. Finally, this re-inscription of the poet's work in its historical period updates a long-dominant post-structuralist discourse that was tributary to Blanchot's catastrophist reading and the indeterminist approaches born with "deconstruction". Thus, a "political Mallarmé" emerged during the *Tel Quel* years — years which were also those of *Change* and "la pensée 68". At this point, the assessment made in 1957 by Jacques Schérer begins to no longer be pertinent: "Mallarmé's attitude towards society remains to be studied".<sup>5</sup> As is well known, in a time that has too hastily been defined as that of the linguistic turn, with Sollers, Kristeva, Faye, but also with Barthes or Straub, interpretations of Mallarmé's work followed a revolutionary paradigm. For the first time in the history of Mallarmé's reception, the political texts from the *Divagations* were cited.<sup>6</sup> The Roland Barthes of the *Leçon*, identifying the "literary" with a "language exterior to power", sums up quite well the spirit of the reading of this time: "'To change language', that Mallarméan expression, is a concomitant of 'To change the world', that Marxian one'. There is a political reception of Mallarmé, of those who have followed him and who follow him still".<sup>7</sup> During the 1980's, this thesis of the existence of a thought of the community proper to Mallarmé will then be deepened and presented in a less ideological and more philological manner in the works of Bertrand Marchal, which are centred on an unprecedentedly close reading of the *Divagations*, along with the exhumation of the "alimentary work" that was *Les Dieux antiques*. Rancière and Marchal, while agreeing on the question of utopia, do not for all that propose an identical reading. The dream of an ideal society sketched by the author of 'The Court' and 'Confrontation' raises a certain number of sensitive questions: what kind of thought of living-together can be read in the *Divagations*? What are the precise contours of this community? Is it a matter of a new aristocracy at the heart of democracy? What place does this communitarian thought accord to the sacred? What, precisely, would the role of the Poet be once he has been placed back within the walls of the City?<sup>8</sup>

For Marchal, who makes of the author of 'Catholicism' and *Les Dieux antiques* a contemporary of *The Ancient City* by Fustel de Coulanges, this vision of the community is above all a "religion". Poetry must contribute to the edification — on critical, fictive and self-reflexive foundations — of the new superstructures of society. By contrast, in the eyes of Rancière, who opposes Mallarmé to Feuerbach<sup>9</sup> so as to align him with Marx,<sup>10</sup> this chimerical vision of the common remains a politics tied to the exposure of the infrastructures of society. But in both cases, Mallarmé, who is no longer to be situated in a history of pure literature but in the history of the great social utopias, is a man of the future — a future that is in the first case reli-

gious, and in the second political. For the Bourdieu of *The Rules of Art*, the author of the *Divagations* is perceived, for reasons of his “obscurity”, as a partial or elitist agent of a veritable critique of culture, and is less a utopian than a sociologist.<sup>11</sup> The Mallarméan project of the “impious dismantling” of fiction would thus anticipate the mission of the sociologist, understood as the unveiling of the mechanisms of the *illusio*, which ground the literary as well as the social game.<sup>12</sup> Finally, we can identify a fourth main reading, which would see in this poetry a radical contestation of institutionalized politics: that is, a “literary anarchism” close to a nihilism. This was Sartre’s thesis, who saw in the work — as in the entire being — of Mallarmé, a “terrorism of politeness”<sup>13</sup> inseparable from a “sad mystification”.<sup>14</sup> This was also — in a quite different mode, of course — Kristeva’s thesis, who made Mallarmé a “prudent writer-anarchist”.<sup>15</sup> It is this fourth thesis that I would like to re-examine here, by returning to the complex links between the literary and libertarian milieus during what Jean Maitron has called “the era of the bombings [*l’ère des attentats*]”.<sup>16</sup> Before going into depth, let us be clear that the study of the relations between literature and anarchy have been enriched by numerous works since the pioneering article of Jacques Monférier,<sup>17</sup> to which we nevertheless are indebted.

The first observation it is worthwhile making is that the anarchist *reception* [*écoute*] of Mallarmé does not date from the “*Tel Quel* years”. It is precisely contemporaneous with the time of those bombers who terrorized a France that had been “ravacholized” [*ravacholisée*] from top to bottom. In fact, Gustave Lanson, who, in contrast to Brunetière or Lemaître, agreed to read Mallarmé and to comment on him at some length, published, in *La Revue universitaire* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 1893,<sup>18</sup> one year after the bombings of Ravachol and a few months before that of Auguste Vaillant, an enthralling article, irrespective of its value judgements, which aimed to establish a parallel between political subversion and linguistic subversion. After stating — and not without some irony — that “what makes the work of Monsieur Mallarmé interesting is that it is not understood”, the academician establishes two points of contact between political and linguistic subversion by drawing on a phrase that was then in the process of becoming famous and which was to be found in the recent publication of *Vers et Prose* (1893): “the pure work implies the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who cedes the initiative to words”. At the *theological* level, what Lanson describes as a quest for a literary absolute recalls a form of quietism. Through a passive poetry that takes place outside of all intellect and will, Mallarmé repeats and transposes Madame Guyon and Fénelon. He reduces language to its purely sensible dimension, making the word a sonorous and no longer an intelligible sign, while the poetic consciousness is transformed into a simple “recording apparatus”.<sup>19</sup> This leads to a “spontaneous organization of words that occurs well below the level of consciousness”.<sup>20</sup> Mallarmé would thus seek to establish an immediate and unimpeded relation between the Ego and the infinite, thus awakening a heterodoxy proper to a mystical perspective. However, at the sociological level, this literary absolute is an anarchism. This time, Mallarmé repeats and transposes Max Stirner. It is interesting to highlight the fact that it is precisely this thinker

who is evoked here, and not Proudhon, Bakunin or Kropotkin. Lanson draws on an article by Jean Thorel published in the edition of April 15, 1893 of *La Revue Bleue*.<sup>21</sup> In fact, in a fragmentary, allusive manner, the author of *The Ego and His Own* (1844) had just been discovered by French readers. His magnum opus will only be translated by Henri Lasvignes in 1900, a publication followed by Victor Bash's pioneering study, *L'Individualisme anarchiste: Max Stirner*, published in 1904. This, then, is the earliest moment of the French reception of Stirner, which follows shortly after the contemporaneous reception of Nietzsche.<sup>22</sup> From this perspective, the poet of the "Penultimate is dead" succeeds in "blowing up" the "intellectual institutions"<sup>23</sup> bequeathed by society, namely the lexicon, semantics and logic. He concludes:

Mallarmé is a literary anarchist [...] his art is the literary equivalent of anarchy [...] his doctrine represents the final stage at which aesthetic individualism can blossom, just as anarchy is the extreme end that social individualism can attain. There is nothing more sociable in us than our intelligence, and through our ideas all of us are in one, and one of us is in all.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, with his violently anti-discursive poetry, Mallarmé broke the contract of communication, and by breaking this verbal contract he broke the social contract. There is no longer any community since there is no longer any common measure, but only a singular speech cut off from common language. A quite similar analysis of the Mallarmé case will be found amongst anti-Romantic thinkers of the Right, above all Maurras at the moment of the poet's death. In any case, Lanson sees in Mallarméan poetry, and in a dazzling form, a veritable politics of writing, and not a politics of the writer: "let me not be accused of having said that Monsieur Mallarmé is complicit with Ravachol, and that his work has inspired layers of dynamite".<sup>25</sup> What should be made of this idea of Mallarmé the literary anarchist?

Of course, such a precisely dated and situated reading relies upon two implicit, indeed unthought, ideas: a certain idea of anarchism, equated here with the thought of Stirner, which is brandished as an interpretative grill in the very midst of the era of bombings; and a certain idea, frozen in 1893, of Mallarmé's work. Mallarmé, who is here discussed on the basis of the anthology *Vers et Prose* as well as the 1887 photo-lithographic edition of the *Poésies*,<sup>26</sup> is not the author of the ten 'Variations on a Subject' given to *La Revue Blanche* (1895), nor the author of 'Music and Letters' (1894-1895), these being the "critical poems" in which he will, precisely, clarify his "politics" so as, perhaps, to respond in part to this Lansonian attack.<sup>27</sup>

This raises a series of question. With respect to politics, can we speak of *literary anarchism* without indulging in an abusive analogy? Is it possible to be an anarchist in literature and in politics? Can we speak of an "anarchist aesthetics", to take up the title of a study by André Reszler, published in 1973? Can anarchist literature be anything other than a militant or didactic literature, and thus tributary to traditional artistic forms? Can "modernism" be defined as the successful aesthetic transfiguration of the political failure of the anarchist movement? Of course, anarchism does not necessarily mean aesthetic modernity, or avant-gardism.<sup>28</sup> Then

there is another bundle of problems: how should Mallarmé be situated with respect to certain *Mardistes* like Fénéon, Vielé-Griffin, Mauclair, Bernard Lazare, Octave Mirbeau and Pierre Quillard, all of whom publicly and explicitly took up the cause of anarchy?

Let us begin by recalling that, if one dives into the periodicals and the journals of the 1890's, the link between the libertarian and literary milieus constitutes an undeniable fact of the time. Thus, recalling for the readers of *La Plume* the history of anarchism in a special edition of May 1st 1893, Emile Joannès notes: "1893: a prodigious extension of the anarchist movement since the acts of Ravachol. *Les intellectuels sont à l'idée*".<sup>29</sup> On September 1st 1892<sup>30</sup> the same journal published the opinions of a number of writers on anarchy: Zola, Coppée, Barrès, Maeterlinck, Scholl, but also Mallarmé (we will come back to this). It would also be necessary to highlight a key moment in this convergence between anarchism and symbolism, namely the entrance of Elisée Reclus in July 1892 into Vielé-Griffin and Paul Adam's journal, *Les Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*, a journal that published Bakunin, Proudhon, Stirner, but also reflections on free verse. In this journal the militant geographer published a text addressed to "the comradely editors", to whom he pays tribute as follows: "you throw out all of the dogmas with all of the formulas and prosody".<sup>31</sup> It has since been a commonplace of the majority of histories of Symbolism to mention this ideological proximity between the different apostles of freedom: "free verse" and "free theatre" rhyme with "free association". In his *Histoire de la littérature* from 1936, Thibaudet defined Symbolism as an "artistic Blanquism".<sup>32</sup> How should we interpret this politico-aesthetic encounter? Is "literary anarchism" anything other than a category used in reports from Police Headquarters at a time when the man of letters is under close surveillance?<sup>33</sup> At any rate, it will be necessary to carefully distinguish between this formula and its purely polemic avatar, in the sense of dilettantism, that is, an "anarchy of taste", an absence of any criteria for evaluating the new literature. This latter is the prevailing meaning given to anarchism by Anatole Baju (*L'Anarchie littéraire*, Vanier, 1892),<sup>34</sup> or Charles Recolin (*L'Anarchie littéraire*, Perrin, 1898), a defender of Brunetière and Doumic.

### The Misunderstandings

If we synthesize contemporary scholarship, two dominant ideas emerge: a superficial encounter; and a fundamental discrepancy. Let us begin with this.

According to the first, this apparent convergence would mask a deep misunderstanding, or at the very least a superficial and short-term agreement. With the exception of some personalities who demonstrated a sincere, profound and durable engagement, such as Mirbeau, Quillard, Lazare or Fénéon, the majority of young Symbolists swiftly left the movement. This was the case with Paul Adam, Camille Mauclair, Francis Vielé-Griffin and Adolphe Retté, who turned towards nationalism, militarism, *L'Action Française*, and even the ivory tower, as soon as anarchism,

following the enforcement of the so-called “villainous’ laws”, changed political strategy and oriented itself towards unionism. Thus “literary anarchism” means an anarchism of the men of letters or of the salon; an “infatuation” situated at the intersection of dandyism, snobbism and dilettantism. Mauclair, reflecting on his anarchist past, waxes ironical: “I imagined an anarchism that was aristocratic and yet a friend of the people [...] We were anarchists because it had an allure, a romanticism, because this attitude suited our situation as scorned writers”.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, another renegade, Retté, in his *Promenades subversives* from 1896, stigmatizes “the fashion of calling oneself a rebel” that is inseparable from all of the “backtrackings of the bourgeois caste”.<sup>36</sup> In fact, we can only highlight two principal points of divergence between the two sides. Symbolism, which essentially developed against a backdrop of pre-Raphaelism, is characterized by a forgetting of the social question. It was, if we subscribe to Valéry’s analysis for instance, a displacement of the literary towards mysticism and occultism. In contrast to the numerous avant-garde manifestos of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, what was at stake in Moréas’ manifesto was nothing but literature. Furthermore, a discrepancy appears at the level of the philosophy of history. Symbolist thought, which in this case is a twilight thought permeated by Schopenhaurism, is characterized by a pessimism close to nihilism. On the contrary, anarchist thought, which is progressive and which aimed during its constructive stage at social regeneration, affirms itself as the thought of a dawn. Thus *La Plume* publishes in 1893 *Chants lyriques pour le monde à venir* by Jean Carrère, a poet who celebrates the rise of the “Great Morning” and the death of the darkened world,<sup>37</sup> once the bloody test of the “Great Evening” has been surmounted. We are here at the opposite end of the spectrum from theories of decadence, complacency and morbidity.

Denouncing this anarchist posture *cum* imposture is a commonplace of the time, as much on the left as on the right of the politico-literary spectrum. Fashionable anarchism, an obvious target of satire, will become a character in the novel *Les Trois Villes* by Zola. In *Paris* (1898), the very aristocratic princess of Harth will make the anarchist cause her latest plaything. Likewise, her accomplice in petty gossip, Hyacinthe, the son of the very rich Duvillards and a parody of the young “fin-de-siècle” man, will say: “But sir, it seems to me that in these times of degradation and universal ignominy, a man of some distinction cannot but be anarchist”.<sup>38</sup> In Léon Daudet we find — but from a completely different perspective — a virulent denunciation of this artificial anarchism, incarnated by the hollow men the novelist calls the “kamtchatka” or the “primitives”.<sup>39</sup> Of course, such a misalliance is attacked by certain militant anarchists themselves. The social origin of writers is treated with irony. Pierre Kropotkin, in *La Conquête du pain* from 1892, judges that the modern artist remains too bourgeois. For anti-intellectual reasons, writers are treated with suspicion. Thus the Italian anarchist group the *Intransigeants*, founded by Pini and Parmeggiani, partisans of “individualist reprisals”, held that “whoever signs a book or a journal article cannot be an anarchist”.<sup>40</sup> However, it is necessary to highlight the fact that anarchism, as a multifaceted movement, remains a nebula with poorly

defined contours and, like all movements, is traversed by internal tensions. An important distinction must be made between the anti-intellectual group of Père Peinard and Emile Pouget and Jean Grave's group *La Révolte*, Grave being a militant who edited a journal equipped with a "literary supplement" that published Prince Kropotkin and the Reclus brothers. Nevertheless, in these columns we also find polemical tracts against writers, as well as the expression of a form of hatred for "literature". Emile Renoult, in 'Gendelettres', an article from 1891, proclaims loud and clear that "literature is not revolutionary" it is nothing but a "sham".<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, aesthetic arguments that reduce all "literature" to ideas of verbal obscurity, of elitism or of formalism, are frequently advanced. In fact, in conformity with Proudhon's theory of art, the majority of anarchists take social art as their model. Jean Grave, in the chapter 'Anarchy and Art' from his 1895 book *La Société future*, attacks autonomous artistic practices that are cut off from the people. The same Jean Grave, reporting on Mallarmé's *Divagations* in 1897 for *Les Temps nouveaux*, judges that the poet wrote his sentences in English before translating them into French... Here it is necessary to recall a little-known point, namely that this era of bombings also saw a resurgence of the debate, inherited from Romanticism, between the tenants of "social art" and the tenants of "art for art's sake". This dual categorization is still at work at this date, as evidenced by the foundation in 1891 of the journal *L'Art social*. In a programmatic text, Gabriel de La Salle argues that "socialist poets do not have to busy themselves with the exterior form they are to give their work".<sup>42</sup> As for Symbolist and decadent writers, they are representatives of "arts of bourgeois decadence".<sup>43</sup> Let us add, however, that such a vision remains the subject of debate even within literary anarchist milieus: what would, it is asked, a properly anarchist art be? Pierre Quillard denounces didactic deviations; Bernard Lazare takes aim at formalistic deviations; and Camille Pissaro decides without deciding in a letter to Mirbeau on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1892: "all the arts are anarchist when they are beautiful and good!".<sup>44</sup> Before the beginning of the Dreyfus Affair, the debates show us that in France these "anarchist years" play a determining role in the birth of the figure of the "intellectual". We witness here a "general repetition" of the Affair, to take up a formula of Christophe Charle.<sup>45</sup>

### A Vague Terrain of Agreement

As a counterpoint to this failed encounter between anarchy and literature, which requires us to distinguish clearly between sympathy and militancy, the existence of a certain number of more or less general points of contact have been noted, all of which can be grouped around the following axis: a certain spirit of revolt. In fact, as Bertrand Marchal notes, the Symbolist youth "willingly claim for themselves a form of intellectual anarchy that satisfies, by proxy, a contempt for society".<sup>46</sup>

At the ideological level, these two milieus share the same hatred of capitalist society and the same refusal of bourgeois thought and morality — grievances to which

there can be added a condemnation of the commodification of literature. But this remains quite vague. On the side of the Symbolists, the texts of the anarchist theoreticians seem to be little known. Amongst the writers, but not including Paul Adam, touched as he was by the crash of the Union Générale, we encounter no true knowledge of economic issues, nor of the complex problem of the distribution of wealth, which underwrites debates around collectivism, corporatism and federalism. Maeterlinck, who declared himself to be “completely ignorant of sociology” and who claimed nothing more than the “right to silence”<sup>47</sup> on this subject, represents well the general tendency. At the socio-literary level, the anarchist temptation becomes the new name of the artistic liberalism of 1890. To be an anarchist means to claim the freedom of art, the independence of the artist and a “pure art”, that is, an art that is autonomous with respect to justice, morality and the economy. Thus, Lucien Muhlfeld writes: “there is the tradition, the tradition which recommends to the literary avant-garde that they adopt the most left-leaning opposition of the romantics who welcomed the novelty of 1848”.<sup>48</sup> Finally, at the aesthetic level, there exist the “barbarous nuptials”,<sup>49</sup> which take place more on the terrain of images than of ideas, between the fin-de-siècle spirit and anarchist thought, through the emergence of an “imaginary in crisis” more than an “anarchist imaginary”.<sup>50</sup> Thus anarchist-like literature develops an imaginary of catastrophe, that “eternal black poetry” of which Zola speaks in an interview on anarchy published in *Le Figaro* on April 25 1892. The end of the century rhymes with the end of the world, the bomber bringing with him the exterminating angel through a common fascination with murder or sacrifice. Anarchism is coupled with decadentism, this latter being a legacy of the 1880’s when links were established between Anatole Baju and Louise Michel, rather than with Symbolism. Furthermore, there is an evident interest amongst certain novelists for the novelistic form of the anarchist, which offers multiple narrative possibilities.<sup>51</sup> But this means leaving Symbolism, which for the most part turned its back on the narrative novel by poeticizing it,<sup>52</sup> to turn towards naturalism and its margins, even if there are obvious exchanges between the different movements. On the side of the Symbolist milieu, an anarchist spirit can be felt in fairy tales (Bernard Lazard), Scandinavian (Ibsen, Strindberg) or German theatre (Hauptmann), which had only recently been introduced, or the mystery novel (Mauclair). If there is a work that thematizes these complex relations between art and anarchy, it is without doubt *Le Soleil des morts* — a novel on Symbolism and not a Symbolist novel — which, like *Paris* by Zola, appeared in 1898, two works that it would be suggestive to compare. Mallarmé’s disciple, who took his distance from the Master, shows the impossible union between Symbolism and anarchism on the basis of the broad opposition between (pure) art and action, which is allegorized via Calixte Armel and Claude Pallat, both of whom are “excommunicated prophets”.<sup>53</sup> The narrator writes: “the intellectual isolation preached by the poet required the absolute individualism of the anarchist; between them there was a world, but they only had to make a movement in order to join hands”.<sup>54</sup> At the end of the story, regeneration in the form of the riot fails, while the shadow of Armel is buried, “laid low in the mud by the livid Dawn”.<sup>55</sup> For Mauclair at this time, anarchism



constitutes the underside of Symbolism, its negative. He portrays two extremisms, both destined to encounter an impasse, both dismissed, and both made gangrenous by the decomposition of the elite as of the crowd: there will be no Great Morning and the only solar light will come, perhaps, from posthumous glory. Yet the entire novel is founded upon the oscillations of the hero, De Neuze, torn as he is between these two postulations. Later on, in *Servitude et grandeur littéraires*, as we have seen above, Mauclair will return to the desire to reconcile the irreconcilable: “I imagined an anarchism that was aristocratic and yet a friend of the people”.<sup>56</sup> Let us add that this novel has no doubt played a far from negligible role in the emergence of an image of Mallarmé as a paradoxical anarchist, tempted not by direct action but by a “white anarchy, or an anarchy by abstention”.<sup>57</sup>

As we will now see, it is the cardinal notion of the individual that for a moment allowed this dream a union between revolts.

### The Question of Individualism: From Agreement to Disagreement

If the Symbolists willingly subscribe to the anarchist cause, it is because they perceive it as a radical individualism that supports their vision of society. But misunderstandings again arise as soon as we try to define this fin-de-siècle individualism. This individualism is, first of all, as is well known, an “idealism” in a sense that Gourmont, a reader of Schopenhauer, gave it: that is, a subjectivism, indeed a perspectivism. The author of *Sixtine* explains this to Jules Huret in 1891. The true name of this new literature is “idealism” and not “symbolism”: “so many thinking brains, so many diverse worlds, and when we wish to represent them, so many different arts [...] therefore, again, an unlimited freedom in the domain of artistic creation, literary anarchy”.<sup>58</sup> Gourmont will return incessantly to this idea. A little later, in *La Revue blanche*, he takes up the equation again:

... Symbolism, cleansed of the extravagances that shortsighted weaklings have given it, is translated literarily by the word Liberty, and for those who are violent, by the word Anarchy, [...] Idealism signifies the free and personal development of the intellectual individual in the intellectual domain; Symbolism could (indeed should) be considered by us as the free and personal development of the aesthetic individual in the aesthetic domain.<sup>59</sup>

Likewise, in the same epoch, Vielé-Griffin puts forward a “literary anarchy for which [he] has fought” and whose ideal is “the freedom of the individual in the expression of his very individuality: poetry”.<sup>60</sup> From an identical yet this time theatrical perspective, Victor Barrucand, a collaborator of *L'Endehors*, applauds the author of *A Doll's House*: “Ibsen is a unvarnished champion of individual independence; it is in this sense that he is an anarchist, and with him the intellectual elite of the time — of our time”.<sup>61</sup> Conversely, and in a convergent manner, Mirbeau will define political anarchism as the “reconquest of the individual”, or “the freedom of the individual's development in a normal and harmonious direction”.<sup>62</sup> Thus when

re-situated in its time, the thesis that Lanson applied to Mallarmé, and which we presented above, does nothing but reformulate the positions of certain Symbolists, above all Gourmont, so as to denounce them.

Moreover, Symbolist individualism undeniably hides an aristocratism. It constitutes the corollary of the hatred of a “leveling socialism”<sup>63</sup> that we encounter in the writings of Mauclair, Mirbeau or Retté at a time when the majority of writers subscribe to the theory of the artist as a “superior man”. Sometimes, this hatred is such that *bourgeoisisme* will be preferred to communism, egotism to the evangels of “saint Marx”.<sup>64</sup> Thus Mirbeau, at the time of the Fénéon affair, wonders if the man of letters is an “anarchist”; he responds in the negative by invoking the absence of propagandistic activities, then adds: “certainly, he must come up with some aristocratic and free philosophy of society”.<sup>65</sup> We encounter the same attitude in Tailhade, who mixes cynicism, dandyism and elitism: “I take from anarchism on the one hand what amuses me, and on the other what favours my intellectual egotism. The whole aristocratic part of it pleases me”.<sup>66</sup> Adolphe Retté also multiples similar affirmations: “The duty of poets is to affirm the aristocracy of the idea, the only legitimate artistocracy, for Artists are the Aristis [*car les Aristes sont les Aristes*]”.<sup>67</sup>

Such an exaltation of artistic and political individualism leads to serious confusions and misunderstandings between libertarian individualism, anti-state and properly anarchist libertarianism on the one hand, and an aristocratic, anti-democratic and anti-modern, indeed reactionary, individualism on the other. One attacks institutions and authority, while the other attacks the people, universal suffrage and equality understood as egalitarianism. One is auroral, while the other is crepuscular. The true-false encounter between anarchism and Symbolism takes place on this ambiguous terrain. This is the reason such radically opposed readings of the cult of the Ego of Barrès will be proposed — a cult that will be anarchist for certain Symbolists, but which, for militant anarchist intellectuals, will be, in the best of cases, nothing but a refined egotism. In the same way, the question of anarchy will encounter that of the initial reception of Nietzsche, as Edouard Schuré’s long study, published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1895, suggests.<sup>68</sup> Now, this libertarian individualism, as Georges Palante points out in 1907 in *Anarchisme et individualisme*, is nothing but the first moment of anarchist thought, which itself is founded upon an altruistic principle oriented towards social harmony, solidarity, and reciprocal help dear to Kropotkin, and which seeks to promote free association: “Freedom of all through agreement between all”,<sup>69</sup> Sébastien Faure proclaims in *L’encyclopédie anarchiste*. The symmetry between the two special editions of the journal *La Plume* at this time should be highlighted. The edition of May 1st 1893 is devoted to “anarchy”, while the edition of 15<sup>th</sup> June 1894 studies “aristocratism”. Thus could be clarified to some degree Jean Maitron’s thesis according to which the influence of Stirner’s thought was “insignificant” for the intellectual development of anarchism in France, in contrast to that of Proudhon, which was “permanent and profound”.<sup>70</sup> For Jean Thorel, tribute was to be paid to Stirner as the veritable father of anarchism: Bakunin had “borrowed a lot”<sup>71</sup> from him. In any case, this

long promotion of artistic individualism, itself an inheritance of the conquests of militant romanticism, constitutes a fertile ground which, as a counterpoint to the development of socialism, will make possible the effortless adoption of Stirner in France at this time, as is true for Nietzsche as well. Let us end with Jean Grave: the individual had interested the anarchist “well before the bourgeois men of letters had discovered Nietzsche and Stirner”.<sup>72</sup>

### Mallarmé the Anarchist?

From our perspective, it is this question of individualism, which up to now has been insufficiently taken into account,<sup>73</sup> that allows us, if not to decide the debate concerning Mallarmé, then at least to properly envisage it. All of Mallarmé’s equivocations over aristocracy and democracy, individual and community, literature and politics, modernity and anti-modernity, can be summed up in the following lines from John Payne, addressed to Mallarmé in October 1886:

I am sending you a short article from the newspaper *The Globe* that deals with you: it will amuse you, as it amused me. It must have been very amusing to have heard Louise Michel speak of literature. You are right: she must have taken the decadents to be anarchists. You see, you villain, the misunderstandings to which you expose yourself by feigning, through pure love of paradox, to be a Republican and a Striker, you who are a refined, even aristocratic, Conservative, hating from the bottom of your delicate soul this dirty kitchen of smoke and willful obscurantism that is named (*lucus a non lucendo*) Liberalism.<sup>74</sup>

The question remains delicate, and we can agree with Antoine Compagnon when he says that it constitutes a “large dossier”.<sup>75</sup> Two radical theses seem to us to be inadmissible. On the one hand, we cannot subscribe to the approach of Caroline Granier, who hastily excludes the author of the *Divagations* from her field of reflection on the basis of a rather banal Mallarméan vulgate (that of intransitivity and autotelism), which has been undermined since the works of Bertrand Marchal. The anarchist ideal, she writes, is situated “at the opposite end of what seems to be Mallarmé’s project: life neither begins nor ends except in the book”.<sup>76</sup> She makes the claim, without demonstration, that his “public opinions are in no way proximate to anarchism”.<sup>77</sup> The historian adds that if the poet subscribed to the literary journal *La Révolte*, then this was only because of its “high literary quality”.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, given the positions adopted by the poet, to which we will return, we cannot be satisfied with a pure and simple identification of Mallarmé with the phenomenon, if not the cause, of anarchism, such as critics from Julia Kristeva<sup>79</sup> to Pascal Durand<sup>80</sup> have done. Must we for all that subscribe to the idea formulated by Antoine Compagnon according to which “Mallarmé played with anarchy, in any case with the word, and it was a risky and provocative game”?<sup>81</sup> For our part, it seems to us that it is not a question of a game, or of an undecidable “between-two”

dear to Compagnon, but rather of displacement. The same goes for anarchy as for aristocracy: “I fear that I have displaced the question”,<sup>82</sup> we read in the 1895 version of ‘The Court’. In fact, Mallarmé displaced all of the polemical concepts of his time, whether they be literary (“verse”, “music”, “Fiction”, “Idea”, “Theatre”, etc.) or sociological (“divinity”, “society”, “the Crowd”, etc.). This is what we would now like to show by distinguishing between two levels of analysis: the intention of the author, to the degree that we can reconstitute it, and the intention of the reader, which is tied to the effect produced by the text.

### Intentio auctoris: correspondence, responses to inquiries, speeches and “critical poems”

Let us attempt to group together here the explicit – and notorious – Mallarméan references to anarchy, by treating them in a chronological manner, which implies making a distinction between prepublications in journals and the collection *Divagations* from 1897. We will see that it is quite imprecise to write, as Eisenzweg does, that in Mallarmé we find nothing but a “constant, obstinate and recurrent silence”<sup>83</sup> on anarchism.

Everything “begins”<sup>84</sup> in February 1892, a little before the “veritable epidemic of terror”<sup>85</sup> that was unleashed in Paris, and not long before the first bombing by Ravachol, with Mallarmé being solicited by the journal *La Plume* via Paterne Berrichon to comment upon current anarchist affairs. The poet receives the following letter: “...we would be pleased to know your opinion on the ideas that Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, Oscar Wilde, Camille Pissarro, Grave, etc., will develop in this edition; ideas with which, moreover, you are familiar”.<sup>86</sup> Mallarmé responds as follows:

When I hold in my hands the edition of *La Plume*, which I congratulate you for having placed into the hands of Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, Oscar Wilde, Camille Pissarro, Grave and others, I will read, admire and sympathize with it; but before? and do not ask me to deal in the space of a note a subject on which, to get a word in, one would need all of the special authority of these saints and martyrs.<sup>87</sup>

The editors of this correspondence make the following comment; “a very awkward letter; we understand Mallarmé’s refusal”.<sup>88</sup> And in fact, lacking a clear position, the journal will only publish this response in the rubric ‘Letters on anarchy’ on September 1st 1892; nothing from Mallarmé will appear in the special edition of May 1st 1893. But it is at the moment of the banquet of February 15<sup>th</sup> 1893 of this same journal that the poet will declaim his ‘Toast’, rebaptized ‘Salut’ for the *Poésies*. At the same time, during the Panama scandal and the trial of de Lesseps, Mallarmé publishes, in February 1893 a text in the National Observer, a first version of the “critical poem” ‘Gold’ from the *Divagations*. We read in these lines, which are, as always, sinuous and which will be tightened further still in 1897, no doubt because of their too-circumstantial anchorage, the following:

The salons have conversed correctly. Many hands, in some sense anarchist, of otherwise conventional people, holding back their élan from fear of appearing to protest against the arrest only just read out, shake in a dignified, spontaneous, grave manner the hand of the condemned, as if nothing had happened, effacing the trace of the slanderous litigation: they have signified something unconscious and supreme. Judges, pronounce: to us, a tribute paid by the imprudent, and to give pain back to them, no; at least, some intimate and superior consequences.<sup>89</sup>

Even if it would be necessary to refer to the whole of this text, it seems that here Mallarmé is attacking a Republican, indeed a human-all-too-human form of justice, which has no real efficacy: “do not lose from view that the function of Justice is a fiction, for the sole fact that it does not give out money”.<sup>90</sup> Lesseps, “a statue laid low”,<sup>91</sup> seems here to be defended by Mallarmé, and the undermining of the official, which is to say fictive, judgement, has an “anarchist” twist.

Jean Grave’s *La Société mourante et l’Anarchie* appears during the summer of 1893, a book prefaced by Mirbeau and which will earn its author a conviction in 1894 during the *Procès des Trente*.<sup>92</sup> Mallarmé received a copy of the book, but the poet’s response has been lost. A letter from the director of *La Révolte* from July 5<sup>th</sup> thanks the poet for his “clear appraisal”<sup>93</sup> of the book, without saying anything more; what he says immediately after bears on the publication of a summary in *La Révolte* of Villiers’ *Nouveaux Contes cruels*.

There then occurs Vaillant’s bombing of the Chamber of Deputies on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1893. The journalist Paul Brulat, profiting from the presence of writers groups together at a banquet of *La Plume*, obtains the following opinion from the poet, which will be published the day after in *Le Journal*: “I know of no other bomb, than a book”.<sup>94</sup> As is well known, Mallarmé will, moreover, be concerned with the political trajectory of Félix Fénéon, in whose favour he will testify after the Foyot restaurant bombing in April 1894.<sup>95</sup> Mallarmé’s defence will consist in insisting on the gentle character of this man of letters, as well as on the “pure” dimension of his intellectual and strictly artistic preoccupations. Fénéon was acquitted, and we can suppose today that “Mallarmé obviously did not know, like the court, that Fénéon was in fact the author of the bombing”.<sup>96</sup> Let us add that at the moment of the arrest of the suspect, Mallarmé, in a response to a journalist, judged that “for Fénéon there is nothing more dynamite-like than his articles”,<sup>97</sup> a formula that alludes directly to the famous line just cited. Finally, the most precise and developed stance taken by Mallarmé is to be found in ‘Music and Letters’, the conference given in April 1894 in the context of an anarchist effervescence:

The opposite insult stutters forth from the newspapers, for lack of audacity; this leaves a barely articulated suspicion: Why the reticence? The devices, whose explosion lights up parliament with a summary illumination, but pitifully disfigures the curious bystanders, would interest me, because of the light — with the brevity of its instruction, which allows the legislator

to claim internal incomprehension; but I'm against adding bullets and nails to the bombs. Like an opinion; and to blame all the damage only on the fact that there are writers, a little out of the spotlight, who believe, or not, in free verse, captivates me, especially by its ingenuity.<sup>98</sup>

Mallarmé ironizes over the amalgamation the press have created between terrorist anarchism and free verse, all the while condemning the murderous violence, as Zola did too, as well as the inefficacy of the method. In a very precise manner, these judgements recall the theses defended by a close companion of Mallarmé, Pierre Quillard,<sup>99</sup> two years earlier in *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*:

It must be admitted that the explosion of some bombs of dynamite strikes vulgar minds with terror. Yet this surprised panic hardly lasts the time necessary to furnish a pretext for the reprisals carried out by the police and judiciary [...]. On the contrary, the destructive power of a poem cannot be dispersed in one go: it is permanent and its deflagration is certain and continuous; Shakespeare or Aeschylus prepare as infallibly as the boldest of our anarchist comrades the collapse of the old world.<sup>100</sup>

But this is a double-edged argument; it can also be used to call for and justify censorship. Thus during the trial of Jean Grave, the public Minister declares: "the accused today is a book [...] this book is an explosive; we must strike it as if it were a bomb".<sup>101</sup>

We also encounter this commitment to the book and to a revolt that would endure by virtue of the efficacious ideality of thought in a statement made by Mallarmé and reported by Régnier in his *Cahiers* in May 1894:

At Mallarmé's place. He is surprised that the youth today are anarchists, that they have a taste for vulgar protests, for this condescendence to brutal means on the part of people who have at their disposition superior means for protest like the book. He adds that there is no reason to be an anarchist, as long as one allows oneself to write, and, to whomsoever objects to such restrictive laws, he responds that to know how to write is to know how to say anything despite everything, and that tyranny requires the only interesting things, namely allusion and periphrasis.<sup>102</sup>

Let us cite lastly a final testimonial, drawn once again from Régnier's very precious notes, dated April 1894: "there is only one man who has the right to be an anarchist, me, the poet, for I alone make a product that society does not want, in exchange for which it does not give me enough to live on".<sup>103</sup>

What can we conclude from this? If the Master of the Rue de Rome "was surrounded by anarchy between 1893 and 1893",<sup>104</sup> the interpretation of his position remains difficult. Mallarmé, in his response to Berrichon, certainly uses hyperbolic praise to characterize the theoreticians of anarchy ("these saints and these martyrs"), but above all he admits in an indirect manner that he has not read them, and calls upon his responsibility as a writer: namely, to judge the works as individual pieces and

to be able to reflect before responding. Furthermore, as Caroline Granier suggests, his relations with Jean Grave, given the letters we have, seem to be of a far more literary than political nature, even if it is necessary to not overly separate these two domains. Let us be clear that Mallarmé did not sign the letter of defence of the author of *La Société mourante*, and that, in distinction to Mirbeau, Elisée Reclus or Paul Adam, he was not a witness at his trial.

Faithful to his ideal of “restricted action”, as Régnier’s testimonial confirms, Mallarmé foregoes militant activism and limits the engagement of the writer, who is a man with only a pen in hand, to the book-form: “Your act is always applied to paper”.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, following the analyses of Bertrand Marchal, if Mallarmé certainly manifests an interest for the bomb, it is insofar as his poetic gaze carries out a double reduction: on the one hand, of light reduced to ideality, and on the other, of an unveiling reduced to a coming-to-consciousness.<sup>106</sup> From protestation to revelation. Mallarmé displaces anarchism by metaphorizing it, that is, by spiritualizing it, without for all that defusing it, no doubt. It is not a matter of “mining”<sup>107</sup> the foundations of the City, but of illuminating the repressed resource of being-together: namely, language. Thus, in the Mallarméan imaginary, such as it is formulated in precise terms in ‘Music and Letters’, the festival is substituted for a bombing, pyrotechnics for dynamite. As for the circumstantial Mallarméan image of the book-bomb, we believe it should not be accorded too much importance. Mallarmé does not say that the book is a bomb: he responds to the question: “what do you think of bombs?” by displacing it onto the terrain of literary forms. For the author of ‘Restricted Action’, the book is above all a “spiritual instrument”, an essential formula and not an explosives device. This leads us to adopt the other, less historical, point of view on this question.

#### **Intentio Lectoris: The Case Of *A Coup De Dés***

Would Mallarmé be, as Lanson was the first to argue, an anarchist in and through language? It appears that the best realization of this anarchist idea would be the *Coup de dés*, as has recently been argued: “it is here, in any case, that in Mallarmé the bomb of the text explodes in full light”,<sup>108</sup> Pascal Durand wrote in 1999, seeing in the spacialized poem of 1897, which contains the word “deflagration”, a veritable “typographical explosion”. This is to link up with all of the avant-gardist and modernist readings of the poem, from Tzara to Barthes<sup>109</sup> and Kristeva. Such an interpretation overdetermines the visible aspects of the text and the surface that strikes the retina at the expense of the readable aspects and its intellectual layering, while by contrast the poet presented his text as a “precise spiritual staging” that layers the “prismatic subdivisions of the idea”.<sup>110</sup> Let us not confuse a prism with a bomb, nor hierarchy with anarchy. On a number of counts, the *Coup de dés*, as poem-score and poem-stamp, presents itself in terms of depth as a constructed crystal, certainly a mobile and spaced one, much more than as a fire, whether explosive or implosive. This structural text, which is more like Cézanne than the Cubists or the Futurists,

and which produces a relational and constructive poetics, aims to link up, via reading, terms (the star-word) with relations between terms (the text-constellation), or indeed the points of the face of a die with the total figure. Furthermore, as a poem of “spacing” and not of pulverization, it arises from a poetics of play and a logic of the “fold” in which, as always in Mallarmé, syntax remains a “pivot”.

### Between “Grand Politics”, cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Silence

The Mallarméan “displacement” of the anarchist question seems to us to be concentrated in the following formula from ‘Music and Letters’, which we have purposefully kept until the end and which has been little commented on up until this point, even if it seems decisive for attempting to clarify this situation: “A government, in order to have value, will mirror that of the universe. Which is it? Monarchical? Anarchical? ... All conjectures are welcome”.<sup>111</sup> This declaration directly echoes the response given by the poet to the inquiry undertaken in 1893 by the journal *L’Ermitage* regarding “the best condition of social good”. Confronting, with the words of Henri Mazel, a “free and spontaneous organisation” with a “disciplined and methodical organisation”, Mallarmé arrives at the following conclusion: “social theories, almost opposed to one another, are equivalent”.<sup>112</sup> Thus, the poet sends back to back libertarianism and social authoritarianism, as if there were no stable and definitive social state but rather processes which can transform into their contrary. Likewise, the end of ‘Music and Letters’ renders identical, in order to go beyond them, voting and rioting, universal suffrage and direct social confrontation.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, for Mallarmé, as Marchal emphasizes, the social question seems essential while the question of politics remains contingent.<sup>114</sup> The whole of Mallarmé’s project could be summed up in this question: how can the social link be re-established, given that the political link, which is exclusively horizontal, cannot suffice and that we must take into account, vertically, the “sky instinct in each of us”?<sup>115</sup> The author of the *Grands faits divers* would thus aim at a sort of ‘Grand politics’ that would be capable, as in the ideal journalism of ‘An Interrupted Spectacle’, of “recount[ing] events from the particular perspective of dreams”.<sup>116</sup> As a result, from the perspective of this permanent displacement, it is no longer possible to think politics using the categories of real politics. It is thus that we can understand the following epigraph from the first version of ‘The Court’: “for alienating the Nations [*pour s’aliéner des patries*]”.<sup>117</sup> Mallarmé is neither engaged nor disengaged; his “critical poetry” would only have delimited this space at a distance that allows us to think.<sup>118</sup> Anarchy remains one of the modalities of the actualization of a real politics, while Mallarmé aims to link up again with the articulation between the human and the cosmic, which existed in other epistemes. The government and the terrestrial City and that of the Cosmos must once again be thought in a specular manner; life in common must be organized by this “Law, seated in all transparency, naked and marvelous”.<sup>119</sup> Mallarmé retains the idea of “Law” with a capital letter, just as he conserves the idea of the “Nation” [*patrie*] with, once again, a capital letter, and just



as he remains faithful to the concept of the State and of taxation with his Project for a “Fonds littéraire”.<sup>120</sup> Such traditionalism would no doubt horrify an anarchist nominalist like Stirner. Finally, if the social relation is a “fiction” that arises from Belles-Lettres, we arrive at a certain overturning of Platonism. The *res publica* rests on an essentially literary essence, the *res litteraria*, and the Mallarméan republic must be governed by the Poet-King. Such would be the lesson of ‘Safeguard’: the true guardian of the city is the writer, the scribe, the man of letters. The Revolution would come from an ideal Académie française, and would be an invisible revolution. With Mallarmé, very far from the noise and fury of bombings, it is necessary to lend one’s ears and one’s mind to a “Grand politics” of silence, and to wait.

### Notes

1. Reprinted with the kind permission of *Fabula*. Thierry Roger, ‘Art et anarchie à l’époque symboliste : Mallarmé et son groupe littéraire’, *Fabula / Les Colloques*, De l’absolu littéraire à la réléation: le poète hors les murs, URL <http://www.fabula.org/colloques/document2443.php>
2. It is a matter of account for “the belonging of the very concept of poet to the conceptualization of politics as a disposition of human action and of the human community anterior to any and all constitution”, Jacques Rancière, ‘Préface’, *La Politique des poètes*, dir. Jacques Rancière, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992), p. 9.
3. Jacques Rancière, *Politique de la littérature* (Paris: Galilée, 2007), p. 11.
4. See in particular ‘La rime et le conflit. La politique du poème’, *Mallarmé ou l’obscurité lumineuse*, dir. Bertrand Marchal and Jean-Luc Steinmetz, (Paris: Hermann, 1999), p. 115-141.
5. Jacques Schérer, *Le ‘Livre’ de Mallarmé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 108.
6. For an approach at once descriptive and critical of this ‘Mallarmisme’ from the years of French structuralism, we take the liberty of referring to our own work: Thierry Roger, *L’Archive du Coup de dés. Etude critique de la réception de Un Coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard de Mallarmé (1897-2007)*, (Paris: Classiques Garnier 2010).
7. Roland Barthes, ‘Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France’, in *A Barthes Reader* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 466.
8. Two other works of very different nature and tone, but which deal with the same question, should be mentioned here and should be situated in the lineage of Bertrand Marchal’s reading, which made both of them possible. On the one hand, there is Antoine Compagnon’s pleasantly titled article ‘La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres’ (in *Mallarmé ou l’obscurité lumineuse*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-86), which offers a panoramic view of the eminently ambivalent relations Mallarmé had with the Republic by evoking the significant positions of the poet at different critical moments of this period. Let us note that for Compagnon, who dismisses both Sartre and Kristeva, all the while demonstrating his skepticism with respect to Rancière’s interpretation, Mallarmé was neither reactionary, nor revolutionary, nor a “good democrat”, nor a “workerist”. He adds, however: “nothing allows us to decide whether he was anti-democratic” (p. 75). On the other hand, Ludwig Lehnen, in *Mallarmé et Stefan George. Politique de la poésie à l’époque du symbolisme*, (Paris: PUPS), 2010, sets out to criticize in a systematic manner the concept

of “fiction”, such as it was put forward by Bertrand Marchal. This book, which is in part influenced by the German critic of Mallarmé, Kurt Wais, wages war against a reading judged to be too “negativist” or too “ludic” and highlights the clearly anti-modern – and in particular anti-democratic – orientation of Mallarméan thought.

9. ‘Mallarmé’s “humanizing” of religion thus runs counter to the dominant tendency of the century’, Jacques Rancière, *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren* (London/New York: Continuum), 2011, p. 59. For Rancière, in fact, the Mallarméan gesture would not consist in folding the divine back onto the human, but rather in unfolding in a “chimerical” mode that which is divine in the human, all within the framework of a “religion of artifice” (ibidem.) But in this essay, the passage from the religious to the political, or the articulation of the two, remains quite vague.

10. Ibid., p. 64.

11. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l’art* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1998), pp. 450-455.

12. For a discussion and for what is in part a Lacanian reorientation of the Bourdieusian use of Mallarmé, see Patrick Thériault, *Le (dé)montage de la Fiction : la révélation moderne de Mallarmé* (Paris: Champion, 2010), in particular pp. 7-29.

13. Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Mallarmé’, *Mallarmé. La lucidité et sa face d’ombre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 151.

14. ‘There is, in Mallarmé, a sad hoaxer’, Ibid., p. 165.

15. Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985), p. 428.

16. Jean Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France. 1. Des origines à 1914* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 206.

17. Jacques Monférié, ‘Symbolisme et anarchie’, RHLF, April-June 1965. In fact, it would be necessary from hereon to mention the following works: Pierre Aubery, ‘L’anarchisme des littérateurs au temps du symbolisme’, *Le Mouvement social*, October-December 1969, pp. 21-24; Julia Kristeva, ‘L’anarchisme politique ou autre’, *La Révolution du langage poétique*, pp. 421-420; Joan Ungersma Halperin, *Félix Fénéon. Art et anarchie dans le Paris Fin-de-siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); Philippe Oriol, ‘Des sympathies anarchistes de quelques littérateurs’, *Ravachol. Un saint nous est né ! textes établis et rassemblés par Philippe Oriol* (Paris: L’Equipe de la pensée, 1992), pp. 99-112; David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Alain Pessin, Patrice Terrone (dir.), *Littérature et anarchie* (Toulouse: Presse Universitaires du Murail, 1998); ‘Anarchisme et création littéraire’, RHLF, May-June, 1999; Uri Eisenzweig, *Fictions de l’anarchisme* (Paris: Bourgois, 2001); Philippe Oriol, ‘Vive l’anarchie ! Vive le vers libre !’, *Bernard Lazare* (Paris: Stock, 2003), pp. 93-118; Jean-Pierre Lecercle, *Littérature, Anarchies*, (Paris: Editions Place d’arme, 2007); Caroline Granier, *Les Briseurs de formules. Les écrivains anarchistes en France à la fin du 19ème siècle* (Villiers-Cotterêts: Ressouvenances, 2008); Eduardo Febles, *Explosive Narratives. Terrorism and Anarchy in the works of Emile Zola* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2001). Let us add the recent essay by Guliette Sapiro on the *La Responsabilité de l’écrivain* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2011), which is surpassed by the information given by Jean Maitron on the question of anarchism under the Third Republic.

18. See Gustave Lanson, ‘La poésie contemporaine. M. Stéphane Mallarmé’ (1893), *Stéphane Mallarmé, coll. ‘Mémoire de la critique’*, (Paris: PUPS), pp. 269-278.

19. Ibid., p. 275.

20. Ibidem.

21. Jean Thorel, 'Les pères de l'anarchisme. Bakounine, Stirner, Nietzsche', *La Revue bleue*, April 15 1893, pp. 449-454.

22. We should also highlight the important article by Théodore Randal, the pseudonym of the famous Germanist Charles Andler (1866-1933), 'Le livre libérateur', published in September 1892 in *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*. Stirner's text is presented as "the most complete manual of anarchism that is possible" (p. 128). *La Revue bleue* also commented in the person of Jean Throel on Stirner's work by comparing it with that of Bakounin, as well as with Nietzsche, ('Les pères de l'anarchisme', April 15 1893, pp. 449-454). Furthermore, the edition of *La Plume* devoted to anarchy on May 1 1893, titled 'Historique des faits' and curated by Emile Joannès, mentions the name of Stirner amongst the list of the theoreticians of the moment (p. 213). Let us add that Henri Albert, who moreover was the translator of Nietzsche, published the full translation of the introduction to *The Ego and His Own* ('All Things are Nothing to Me') in May 1894 in the *Mercure de France* (No., 53, pp. 28-31). He accompanies the text with the following note, which takes into account the displacement of the horizon of expectation: "Le livre qu'on quitte monarque' appeared just a half century ago. Let us say provisionally that that which now seems to be pure anarchy was not then considered as anything other than a work of the extreme left of Hegelian philosophy... The title of this chapter is also that of a very well known poem from Goethe" (p. 28).

23. Gustave Lanson, 'La poésie contemporaine. M. Stéphane Mallarmé' (1893), art. cit., p. 276.

24. Ibid., p. 277.

25. Ibidem.

26. In particular, Lanson comments in particular in the direction of radical idealism, the ex libris of Félicien Rops (Ibid., pp. 274-275)

27. Antoine Compagnon sees here, for instance, and without doubt correctly, a 'ripost' to Lanson. 'La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', art. cit., p. 62.

28. On these questions, see in particular David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, op. cit., and Wolfgang Asholt, 'Entre esthétique anarchiste et esthétique d'avant-garde: Félix Fénéon et les formes brèves', RHLF, May-June 1999, pp. 499-513.

29. Emile Joannès, 'Historique des faits', art. cit., p. 214.

30. See the 'Lettres sur l'anarchie', *La Plume*, September 1 1892, p. 377.

31. Emile Reclus, 'Aux compagnons rédacteurs', *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, July 1892, p. 3.

32. Albert Thibaudet, *Histoire de la littérature* (1936), CNRS éditions, 2007, p. 513.

33. Jean-Pierre Lecercle, *Littérature, Anarchies*, op. cit., p. 53.

34. It would nevertheless be necessary to cite here the paragraph devoted to the 'Anarchists': 'Those who preach the right to existence and the laziness by all means are the Anarchists. The majority are disgruntled bourgeois who have more bitterness to quell

than convictions to argue for. They demand Liberty, which is to say the right to oppress in turn. Excessively individualist, they do not want to admit that the egalitarian society of tomorrow is a machine where everything will be ruled by the movements of a clock. Up to now they have made more noise with dynamite cartridges than with their literary works. The best known are: Louise Michel, Kropotkin, Sébastien Faure, Charles Malato, Paterné Berrichon, Henri Cholin, Octave Mirbeau, Élisée Reclus, Pouget, Veidaux, Émile Gautier, Chincholle, Ernest Gégout, Alexandre Tisserand, Lucien Mühlfeld, André Gide, Zo d'Axa, Guillaume Le Rouge, Alain Desveaux, La Purge, chansonnier plein de verve, Michel Zévaco, Hamon'.

35. Camille Mauclair, *Servitude et grandeur littéraires*, Ollendorf, 1922, p. 115.

36. Cited by Jean-Pierre Lecercle, *Littérature, Anarchies*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

37. *La Plume* May 1 1893, p. 208.

38. Emile Zola, *Paris*, Jean Noiray (ed.), Gallimard, 2002, p. 78.

39. For more details, see Denis Pernot, 'Léon Daudet et le roman de l'anarchiste', RHLF, May-June 1999, pp. 423-437.

40. Cited by Jean Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France, Tome 1*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

41. *La Révolte*, December 5-11 1891.

42. Gabriel de la Salle, 'Prises d'armes', *L'Art social*, November 1891, p. 3.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

44. On this eternal question of the means and ends of art from the 1890's, see Caroline Granier, *Les Briseurs de formules*, *op. cit.*

45. Christophe Charle, *Naissance des 'intellectuels' (1880-1900)* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1990), p. 129.

46. Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé* (Paris: José Corti, 1988), pp. 368-369.

47. 'Lettres sur l'anarchie', *art. cit.*, p. 377.

48. Lucien Mühlfeld, 'Des sympathies anarchistes de quelques littérateurs', *L'Endehors*, July 27 1892.

49. We take this formula from Pierre Glaudes, at the same time as referring to his very rich clarification of the subject: "Noces barbares": les écrivains de la Belle-Epoque et l'anarchisme', in *Littérature et Anarchie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-189.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

51. On this question, see in particular Uri Eisenzweig, *Fictions de l'anarchisme*, *op. cit.*, and Eduardo Febles, *Explosive Narratives. Terrorism and Anarchy in the works of Emile Zola*, *op. cit.*

52. See the anthology by Guy Ducrey and its rich critical commentary, *Romans fin-de-siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1999).

53. Camille Mauclair, *Le Soleil des Morts* (1898), in *Romans fin-de-siècle*, *op. cit.*, p. 950.

54. *Ibidem.*

55. Ibid., p. 1026.
56. Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, p. 369.
57. Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, p. 369.
58. Rémy de Gourmont, responses to Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (1891), Daniel Grojnovski (ed.), 1999, p. 166.
59. Rémy de Gourmont, 'Le Symbolisme', *La Revue blanche*, June 25 1892, pp. 322-323.
60. Francis Vielé-Griffin, 'Réflexions sur l'art des vers', *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, May 1892.
61. Victor Barracund, 'Un ennemi du peuple', *L'Endehors*, July 10 1892.
62. Octave Mirbeau, 'Preface' to Jean Grave, *La Société mourante et l'anarchie*, 1894, cited by Louis Deschamps, *La Plume* January 1 1894, p. 1.
63. Edouard Schuré, 'L'individualisme et l'anarchie en littérature. Frierich Nietzsche et sa philosophie', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 15 1895, p. 766.
64. A. Veidaux, 'Philosophe de l'anarchie', *La Plume*, May 1 1893, p. 192.
65. Octave Mirbeau, 'Potius!', *Le Journal*, May 7 1894, cited in P. Michel and Jean-François Nivet (eds.), *Combats littéraires*, L'Age d'Homme, 2006, p. 385.
66. 'M. Laurent Tailhade et l'anarchie', *Le Gaulois*, April 6, 1894.
67. A. Retté, 'L'art et l'anarchie', *La Plume* February 1 1893.
68. Edouard Schuré, 'L'individualisme et l'anarchie en littérature. Friedrich Nietzsche et sa philosophie', *art. cit.*, pp. 775-805.
69. S. Faure, *La Douleur universelle* (Antony: Editions Tops, 2009), p. 165.
70. Jean Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France. Tome 1*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
71. Jean Thorel, 'Les pères de l'anarchisme', *art. cit.*, p. 451.
72. Jean Grave, *Mémoires d'un anarchiste*, (Paris: Editions du Sextant, 2009), p. 356.
73. Since Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, critics have seldom explored this question in a direct and extensive manner. Let us highlight the follow works, which deal with it at greater or lesser length: Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, pp. 368-370; A. C. Aubert, 'Mallarmé et la bombe de Zola', *Romantisme*, No. 87, Spring 1995, pp. 69-74; Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', *art. cit.*, pp. 59-66; Pascal Durand "La Destruction fut ma Béatrice". Mallarmé ou l'implosion poétique', *RHLF*, May-June 1999, pp. 373-389; Uri Eisenzweig, 'Poétique de la bombe', *Fictions de l'anarchisme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-205; Jean-Pierre Lecercle, *Littérature, Anarchies*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Patrick MacGuinness, 'Mallarmé and the Poetics of Explosion', *MLN*, September 2009, pp. 797-824.
74. Henri Mondor, *Vie de Mallarmé*, Gallimard, 1941, p. 492.
75. Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', *art. cit.*, p. 59.
76. Caroline Granier, *Les Briseurs de formules*, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

79. Kristeva, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, all the while aligning Mallarmé with political anarchy, insists on the radical divergence that exists between the formally conservative tracts of the militants and the always-already transgressive poems, whose form consecrates the primacy of the 'semiotic' over the 'symbolic', independently of the political opinions of its author.

80. Pascal Durand judges first of all that, because of his sense for forms and formalities, as well as his anti-individualist aesthetics of the impersonal and his distance-taking with respect to prose-based anarchy, "nothing can lead us *a priori* to see in Mallarmé an anarchist" (p. 374). Yet he continues by pointing out the "incendiary declarations" (p. 376) from the time of the Tournon crisis and of his poems published in the *Parnasse contemporain*, and by recalling the virulence of a poet railing against a certain bourgeois materialism. The academician then insists on what he calls Mallarmé's "calm, and for this reason quite worrying, violence" (p. 379), a violence which attacks thematism and, above all, language in its referential function ('meaning-and-having-to-say [le vouloir-devoir dire]'" p. 379). Durand reprises here Lanson's thesis by radicalizing via the reading of *La Musique et les Lettres* proposed by Bourdieu in *Les Règles de l'art*. It is the "impious dismantling of Fiction" – "propaganda by theoretical deed" (p. 386) – that would make of him an anarchist *par excellence*. Let us clarify that the distinction from the time between individualist anarchism and socialist anarchism is not taken into account, just as the notion of anarchy is not questioned historically.

81. Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes : Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', art. cit., p. 65.

82. OC, tome II, p. 325.

83. Uri Eisenzweig, *Fictions de l'anarchisme*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

84. Of course, there cannot be a pure beginning: we could go infinitely, with privileged stopping points at the time of the Commune or in the years of Baudelaire's formation...

85. Jean Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France, Tome 1*, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

86. P. Berrichon, letter to Mallarmé, February 11 1892, Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, Henri Mondor and L. J. Austin (eds.), t. VI, p. 201.

87. Mallarmé, letter to P. Berrichon 16 February 1892, *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

89. Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Faits divers', *The National Observer*, February 25 1893, OC, t. II, p. 312.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

91. *Ibidem*.

92. See Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, Henri Mondor, L. J. Austin (eds.), 1981, Vol. VI, p. 201.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

94. OC, t. II, p. 660. Bertrand Marchal, citing and clarifying the account of this episode such as it is given in the book of souvenirs by Brulat (*Lumières et grandes ombres*, 1930), we learn from the manuscript version of this note that Mallarmé corrected a first formulation of his response, which was: 'I know of no other bomb, than a beautiful book', OC, t. II, p. 1723.

95. For more clarifications, see Bertrand Marchal's note in OC, t. II, p. 1741.

96. Ibidem. The "obviously" here might seem excessive, given the information available to us. It should be read in conjunction with the following formula from *La Religion de Mallarmé*, which proclaims, with respect to the journalistic equation between free versists and posers of bombs: "here is Mallarmé, who is above suspicion, suspected of being complicit with propaganda by the deed" (p. 368); or in conjunction with the other formula that waxes ironic about the "complacency" of the Symbolist milieus with respect to anarchy. Now, as we have seen above, it is the Symbolists themselves – Vielé-Griffin, Gourmont in particular – who build bridges between these different forms of freedom and revolt, without devolving, of course, into an apology for terrorism. On the other hand, dandyism does not explain everything: there were indeed militant engagements. In other words, Marchal, like Caroline Granier, but for different reasons, decides a little too hastily, in our view, the answer to this question.

97. *Le Soir*, April 27 1894, OC, t. II, p. 709.

98. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193. This text, an extract from the conference, will be published in 1897 in *Divagations* in the series 'Grands faits divers' under the title 'Accusation'.

99. If Mauclair is to be believed, the author of *La Fille aux mains coupées*, who would be a future Dreyfusard, was a frequent attendee of the Mardis. Camille Mauclair, *Mallarmé chez lui*, (Paris: Grasset, 1935), p. 45.

100. Pascal Quillard, 'L'Anarchie par la littérature', *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, April 1892, p. 150.

101. Cited by Uri Eisenzweig, *Fictions de l'anarchisme*, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

102. Cited by Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', *art. cit.*, p. 60.

103. Henri de Régnier, *Cahiers inédits*, Pygmalion, 2002, p. 385.

104. Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', *art. cit.*, p. 60.

105. OC, t. II, p. 215.

106. See Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, p. 382-383.

107. 'Mine those substructures, when obscurity invades your perspective; no! – string up some lanterns, in order to see', Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

108. Pascal Durand "La Destruction fut ma Béatrice", Mallarmé ou l'implosion poétique', *art. cit.*, p. 381.

109. Pascal Durand subscribes to the analyses from *Degré zéro de l'écriture* relative to the Mallarméan 'destruction' of language.

110. OC, t. I, p. 391.

111. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

112. OC, t. II, p. 660.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 74. With respect to the question of Mallarmé's political opinion properly speaking, which is difficult to determine, we refer to Antoine Compagnon's clarificatory remarks, Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes: Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', *art. cit.*, as well as to the works of Bertrand Marchal.

114. Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

115. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

117. OC, t. II, p. 325.

118. Bertrand Marchal, 'Poésie et droit de cité', *Mallarmé 1842-1898. Un destin d'écriture* (Paris: Gallimard/RMN, 1998), p. 38. Placed back within the framework of the religious, linguistic and mythographic thought of his time, Mallarmé's politics, according to the author of *La Religion de Mallarmé*, moves towards anthropology and a thought of 'symbolic forms'.

119. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

120. See Antoine Compagnon, 'La place des Fêtes : Mallarmé et la Troisième République des Lettres', *art. cit.*, pp. 80-86.