

CHARLES VILDRAC: NOTHING IS LOST FROM A LOVING HEART

The literary career of French writer Charles Vildrac spanned nearly seventy years from the turn of this century to his death in 1971. While he wrote in a variety of genres, he is best known for his plays, especially *Le Paquebot Tenacity*. Vildrac received world-wide attention when this simple tale of two Great War veterans opened at Jacques Copeau's Vieux-Colombier Theatre in 1920. Vildrac continued to write successful plays, and his fame as a poet, essayist, and author of children's stories made him an important figure in European letters. However, the experimentation in form and nihilistic themes that have dominated creative works of recent years have left little room for Vildrac's straightforward style and quiet optimism. While the following study will focus mainly on Vildrac's World War I poetry, I hope it will also serve to introduce present-day readers to the entire oeuvre of this multi-talented writer.

A thematic and stylistic unity connects Vildrac's works, despite their diversity of form. Although his poems, plays, and stories are often no more than simple episodes in the lives of ordinary people, these singular moments reveal an essential truth of human existence and thus clarify for each individual the direction of the rest of his or her life. Vildrac's plays, however, are not psychological dramas in the tradition of Chekhov, nor are his parables and story poems reminiscent of La Fontaine's fables, for Vildrac avoids the didacticism and critique of society and social "types" associated with these genres and authors. Rather than condemning his characters for their actions, Vildrac gently leads them to recognize and accept the power of love to transfigure even the most failed or tragic life. Whether overt or latent, love in Vildrac's universe moves people toward greater understanding in unexceptional and even mundane circumstances, such as waiting for a ship to depart or sharing a meal. Although Vildrac's concept resembles Tolstoy's emphasis on Christian love, it is not derived from any theology. Its origin is decidedly human, even though its powers are certainly transcendent.

The beginning of Vildrac's career in 1902 coincided with a particularly turbulent but productive artistic atmosphere. In Paris especially, creative people of all media heatedly debated the role of art in the new century, forming countless schools and splinter groups, and founding hundreds of periodicals, some mere pamphlets, others extensive literary and graphic productions. The younger artists established their positions in the on-going discussions by publishing manifestoes, essays, or original works exemplifying their aesthetic ideas, and also by attacking, often viciously, other viewpoints. As the debates continued, the young poets, painters, and musicians modified their ideas and changed their allegiances, often jumping from group to group. Friendships, more often than not, mirrored loyalty to an artistic framework.

One of the leading strands of aesthetic thought at this time had as its primary goal the unification of life and art, the blending of the real and the ideal. Its practitioners rejected the exploration of personal themes as artificial and favored instead the articulation of another reality which was simultaneously limitless and universal. Their love of Hugo's writing and Wagner's music, as well as the activities of contemporary socialists and anarchists, fueled their definition of beauty as the symbiosis of the physical and spiritual presence of the community of humankind. The recent and/or on-going translations of the works of Tolstoy, Ibsen, Nietzsche and, above all, Whitman, responded to their desire to revitalize poetry and painting and to rescue all forms of art from the faded introversion of symbolism and the bourgeois values espoused by academism.

Refusing to limit their ideas to the abstract, many of these artists, including Charles Vildrac, sought to translate into action the principles of their unified view of life and art, either through the establishment of community-centered projects or by organizing cooperatives. The former attempted to democratize the experience of art by drawing upon the untapped energy of factory workers, peasants, and other people traditionally excluded from artistic creation. Popular and free universities sprang up in many urban areas, especially in France and Belgium, in which artists and writers gave courses in literature and poetry, and socialist groups sponsored lectures and plays. Individuals also designed their own strategies, like Maurice Pottecher's People's Theatre in Bussang in which local people acted in plays Pottecher wrote about their lives, or Romain Rolland's plan to establish a network of people's theatres in Paris, which later formed the basis of his influential book of 1903, *Le théâtre du peuple, essai d'esthétique d'un théâtre nouveau*. Among the projects in music was the night school that composer and revered professor at the Paris Conservatory, Gustave Charpentier, established in 1901 called L'Oeuvre de Mimi Pinson, where he gave free voice and music lessons to Parisian factory women.

There were also some artistic experiments during this time whose orientation was opposite to that of the community-centered groups. Its proponents, Charles Vildrac among them, feared that the trend toward consumerism and a technology-based society would curtail their artistic freedom. Vildrac dreamed of establishing a refuge, far from the numbing effects of city life, where all forms of art could be realized in complete aesthetic and economic independence. He tried unsuccessfully to organize different projects designed to insure the liberty of art and artists, and his poems of 1905 speak longingly of a refuge, far from the strictures of modern society. He called it the Abbaye after François Rabelais' mythical secular Abbey of Thélème, where the most important rule was "Fais ce que tu voudras." With this doctrine of individual

freedom, Vildrac combined the principle of fraternal love in an environment where nature and humanity were completely fused:

...En telle Hellade très-fleurie,
Bien loin, je rêve l'Abbaye
Gaie et recueillie...

Nous nous aimerions mieux que les frères,
Elles s'aimeraient mieux que des soeurs,
Tout n'est-il pas possible en rêve...

Je rêve l'Abbaye...(Poèmes de l'Abbaye 46)

Vildrac urged his friends to join him in establishing a sanctuary where art and thought would be far from utilitarianism and materialism. The artists would live and work there in harmony, pooling their resources. A printing press and publishing house would serve the multiple purpose of financing the basic material needs of the group and would also provide a means to publish young authors, like themselves, who could not pay the subsidies that publishers generally required. Further, by learning a manual trade, the artists would adopt a key concept advocated by Tolstoy and exemplified by the life of Whitman and other literary heroes. Through exhibition and sale of their own and other artists' work, the Abbaye would become a self-sufficient, autonomous center for the arts (Sénéchal 139).

Writers Vildrac, Georges Duhamel, René Arcos, and Alexandre Mercereau, the musician Albert Doyen and the painter Albert Gleizes, the original members of the Abbaye, were all young men who had recently completed their military service and had thus experienced the communal life of the army barracks. They had come from more or less comfortable middle-class families, had been to university, and were already engaged in creative and socially-oriented projects in music, plastic art, and poetry, in addition to collaborating on and publishing small-circulation reviews and literary magazines. They despaired at losing their ideals and artistic vision as they grew older and bristled at the image of becoming socially respectable (Mercereau 6-7). They had discovered, like many other young people at that time, the poems of Rimbaud, that pre-eminent symbol of youthful freedom and self-determination, and the ideas of Tolstoy, who wrote of prospects for a new life (Duhamel, *Temps* 30).

Although the commune failed after only fourteen months, due to the conflict between the social principles and artistic individualism of the participants and the complete exhaustion of all resources, its existence and contribution are significant. It provided Vildrac and his friends with a real-life opportunity to test and evaluate their commitment to a unified notion of art. And while the Abbaye itself disappeared physically, these young men did not abandon its underlying principles, for nearly all of them went on to seek other, eventually more successful, innovative and, in several cases, far-reaching ways of

unifying art and life.

It is also significant that a majority of the former Abbaye members and supporters later continued their commitment to the unity of life and idealism by working actively to bring World War I to an end. For Charles Vildrac and others, the reality of war reconfirmed and strengthened their commitment to a view of art as the most perfect expression of all aspects of modern life. Vildrac's war-era poetry presents a multi-faceted, synthetic consciousness of war, yet remains concerned with the beauty of language and the energy of experience. His poetic vision is not limited to the mere reflection of a horrifying reality, but seeks to incite the reader to recapture an ideal world. Vildrac, like other French antiwar writers, attempted to use poetry as a vehicle to change the actual course of history by placing the events of the war within an ethical context. His poetry differs from theirs, however, in its emphasis on the importance of the individual in the actualization of a harmonious universe.

A life-long pacifist, Vildrac retained his antiwar position even while serving variously as soldier and nurse-stretcher carrier at the front. His letters recount the all too familiar stories of deprivation and death. He continued to write despite and perhaps because of the contradiction he sensed between his Tolstoyan principles and his daily activities. It is not surprising that in 1915 Romain Rolland, the best-known of the established writers who opposed the war, had written in his journal about Vildrac: "De tous les jeunes écrivains de valeur, il est l'âme restée la plus libre et la plus irréconciliable à la guerre,"(570) for in his war-era poetry, Vildrac continues the celebration of the eternal human values of love and friendship that had been at the center of his 1910 publication *Livre d'amour*.

Although published four years before the beginning of the war to wide critical acclaim, *Livre d'amour* expressed many of the same values and ideas that Vildrac would explore later in his war-era work. *Livre d'amour* was an important step in Vildrac's literary career for it immediately established his reputation as a writer of seriousness and depth. Gone was the arrogance of his poems published from 1905-1908 in which Vildrac berated ordinary people for their insensitivity to art and their lack of vision. The poems of *Livre d'amour* demonstrated instead a sober, yet exalted celebration of life, love, and friendship. Through soft-colored images flowing steadily in comfortable rhythms, Vildrac's poems created a sense of warmth and openness, an intimacy that invited the reader to share in private moments of joy and pain. Vildrac's skill in involving the reader saves these intensely sensitive poems from melodrama by generalizing an incident while retaining its confidentiality. These episodes show the strength of life, the triumph of joy, and the capacity of love to transform adversity. For example, in "Gloire" a man discovers that while the crowds he addressed respected him, they hadn't understood what was important to him personally. He renounces public gatherings to spend his time discovering each person's unique qualities. It is through this blending of differences that he achieves the unity he sought from the

beginning. The secret that leads to the man's happiness will become the key theme in all of Vildrac's works, from his poetry to his plays and children's stories:

...Son secret fut de posséder
Quelque chose avec chacun d'eux
Quelqu'humble trésor qui leur fût bien cher.

Son bonheur fut de posséder
En commun avec chacun d'eux
Le souvenir secret d'un seul instant
Mais d'un instant élargi d'une telle joie
Qu'ils en pouvaient vivre bien des soirs...

Tous ceux qu'il connut ainsi
Conservèrent, isolée
En leur pudeur,
Certaine image d'eux-mêmes
Où ils aimaient se reconnaître
Et qu'ils ne pouvaient regarder
Sans retrouver ses traits parmi les leurs. (64)

The insistence on the redemptive and curative powers of human love which underlies Vildrac's works has its roots in Tolstoy's conviction that love was humanity's supreme and only real possession, for it alone could resolve all of life's contradictions. Love, according to Tolstoy, erased the fear of death and propelled people to act selflessly when they understood that true happiness was not individual, but communal. Tolstoy stressed sacrifice as necessary to love, for people would have to spend their entire lives making others comfortable and happy. Love is life, Tolstoy explained, but not a senseless, suffering life. It is that need to love everyone and everything: those near and far away, even wicked people, and included all forms of life from animals to the grass in the fields. Therefore, the only durable work of art, Tolstoy believed, was one which would contribute to bringing about the great goal of human fraternity.

Vildrac continued to develop these Tolstoyan themes, first evident in his 1910 collection, in his wartime poetry. Vildrac's antiwar poems appeared first in periodicals such as *La forge* and *Les cahiers idéalistes français* and later in the 1920 volume *Chants du désespéré*. In these poems Vildrac interpreted the Tolstoyan concept of the purpose of art as the ability of the artist/poet to reestablish an ideal world. The title poem proclaims the joyous position of the poet/narrator to recognize the unity of life, a fact which is often obscured by the evil which exists simultaneously with the good. Vildrac uses gentle imagery to demonstrate life's continuity, a flowing force which endures despite superficial contradictions. Accordingly, the poet's song is both sad and happy:

Au long des jours et des ans,
Je chante, je chante.
La chanson que je me chante
Elle est triste et gaie:

La vieille peine y sourit
Et la joie y pleure...

C'est, dans un jardin d'été,
Le rire en pleurs d'un aveugle
Qui titube dans les fleurs;
C'est une rumeur de fête
Ou des jeux d'enfants
Qu'on entend du cimetière.
C'est la chanson pour toujours
Poignante et légère,
Qu'étreint mais n'étrangle pas
L'âpre loi du monde;
C'est la détresse éternelle,
C'est la volupté
D'aller comme un pèlerin
Plein de mort et plein d'amour!... (9-10)

The only means by which the poet can share his knowledge is through the song that is deep within his heart. Vildrac underscores the redemptive power of poetry, the narrator's art, to synthesize opposing realities:

...C'est ma chance et ma richesse
D'avoir dans mon coeur
Toujours brûlant et fidèle
Et prêt à jaillir,
Ce blanc rayon qui poudroie
Sur toute souffrance;
Ce cri de miséricorde
Sur chaque bonheur. (10-11)

As in "Chant du désespéré," Vildrac explores throughout the volume the relationship of the poet/narrator to the all-encircling reality of war. In viewing nature as the concrete symbol and the expression of immutable laws of time and space, Vildrac considers the destruction of even a blade of grass to have far-reaching ramifications for humanity and an especially profound significance for the narrator. The effect of reality on the poet/narrator varies, and at times he abandons his belief in the healing power of love to flounder in complete despair and dream of escape through death.

In "Avec l'herbe," Vildrac establishes a metaphorical equivalence between humanity and nature, using trees and grass to symbolize a besieged humanity. Vildrac skillfully alters the rhythm to reinforce the complete reciprocity of that equation. Hope for nature and humanity are completely inseparable, represented by the advent of spring:

Ah! que je vous regarde avec des yeux fervents,
Arbres grandis ici et là sans contrainte,
Mes frères qu'on n'a pas comptés et mis en rangs
Et qui mêlez doucement vos bras et vos têtes!

Que je ne te force pas à tomber avant l'heure,
Petite feuille d'or qui rêves en te berçant;
Tu naquis pour danser dans l'air et la lumière,

Reste jusqu'à la fin de ta danse et de ton sang!

Ah! et toi, gazon vif, herbe populeuse, heureux
peule
Que font jouer les vents et l'ombre des nuages;
Clémence de la terre! Espérance invincible
Qui renaît de la cendre et qui perce la neige!...(15)

Suddenly, an intense feeling of culpability explodes, causing the narrator to acknowledge his kinship with a flawed humanity. True to his aesthetics of love, Vildrac presents the grass on which the man lies both as a refuge and a place of expiation:

...Qu'en toi je m'agenouille et que je cache en toi,
Herbe, ma face d'homme qui fait fuir les bêtes!
Que je sois confondu à ta taille; et ta loi,
Que je la réapprenne et qu'elle me relève!

Brins verts contre ma bouche et que mon souffle
fait trembler,
Je vous confie la détresse de l'homme
Et la honte où il est d'avoir encore abandonné
Le soin de son royaume au rebut des âmes... (16)

Only after being revitalized by the forces of life can the poet/narrator transcend his innate fallibility to assume the role of intermediary. He seeks for others the deliverance he has already experienced through the unity of life and art:

...Herbe que rajeunit et lave chaque aurore,
Je convie en ton coeur les coeurs toujours aimants;
Je convie en ton coeur ces peuples vieux qui pleurent,
Repliés sous un joug sanglant! (25)

Vildrac's dramatic and forceful images underscore nature's role as both a shelter from a horrifying present and a place where important values can be reestablished. For the narrator in "Chant d'un fantassin," nature is a sanctuary that provides release, comfort, and a sense of cosmic balance. He imagines four alternative realities for himself, and each situation depicts a person or place completely separated from what would be considered its normal context. This isolation carries a double significance: while the hidden ravine and the cast-off individuals might be regarded as the worthless refuse of society, they nonetheless enjoy an independent and happy existence, safe from a destructive society. In this poem, which is justifiably one of his most famous war poems, Vildrac skillfully leads both the narrator and the reader to an understanding of a universal truth at variance with superficial appearance:

...Je voudrais être l'aveugle
Sous le porche de l'église:

Dans sa nuit sonore il chante!
Il accueille tout entier
Le temps qui circule en lui

Comme un air pur sous des voûtes.

Car il est l'heureuse épave
Tirée hors du morne fleuve
Qui ne peut plus la rouler
Dans sa haine et dans sa fange.

Je voudrais avoir été
Le premier soldat tombé
Le premier jour de la guerre. (20-21)

In Vildrac's poems, nature not only provides a permanent safe haven from a transient reality, it also affords more limited escape in the form of short interludes. The first-person narrator feels drawn to life through nature's simplest expressions: a flowering apple tree or a warm wind, which Vildrac presents as examples of the hope of spring in the midst of a winter of war and death. In "Trêve," Vildrac captures the true emotional significance of a truce, using liquid consonants to evoke finely-drawn images of a spring-like shower in December:

...Ces loques lourdes d'eau s'élèvent
Aux longs élans d'un vent attiédi.
Le coeur transi se gonfle aussi.
Le grand voile du ciel voyage
Et les gouttes fines et rares
Qu'il abandonne dans sa hâte
Sont agréables à mon front.

Ah! depuis que je suis un homme
J'en ai vécu, de tels matins!
Et je me chante un de ces airs
Que je connais depuis longtemps;...(22-23)

Vildrac's majestic four-part homage to his fallen friend, the painter and poet Henri Doucet received critical acclaim throughout Vildrac's career. In this poem he reiterates Tolstoy's veneration of work and celebrates Doucet's rural origins through the image of farm people whose labors unite them with both the timeless rhythms of the earth and all generations of the past and the future. Having already established nature as the standard of good, Vildrac transfers that value to farmers by identifying them with the land, and he echoes Tolstoy's condemnation of property ownership as a major source of the world's evils. As a consequence of this view, Vildrac clearly presents the war's proponents as destroyers of the balance of the universe, interpreting their deeds as a crime against nature:

... Qu'importe ce trésor, ô mon ami,
Aux trafiquants du monde!
Leurs enjeux, leurs valeurs se nomment
Patrie, population, territoire, effectifs,
Main-d'oeuvre, marchandise;
Toutes choses qu'on divise
Ou qu'on additionne.

Qu'importe l'arbre patient
 Equilibrant ses branches
 Et qu'importe son attitude
 Comme une pensée à lui seul,
 Ah! qu'importe l'arbre et son rêve
 A celui qui n'aime pas l'arbre!
 A celui qui dit: Mes forêts,
 Mon patrimoine, mon domaine
 Et qui, ne s'informant que de l'âge et du nombre,
 Ordonne à distance des coupes!... (45-46)

Vildrac adroitly focuses on an individual to demonstrate the effects of the war, instead of diluting his portrait by generalization. The father of Henri Doucet had been a factory worker at a munitions plant for thirty years. Now, having lost both his son and his job, he mourns a double sacrifice and does not recognize the irony that connects the guns that he made with the death of his son. Vildrac shows that the war effectively sets people adrift in an unbalanced universe, robbing them of their judgment and even their will to survive, for it has separated humanity from nature.

Vildrac also uses an individual as a collective metaphor. In "Élégie villageoise," the death of Jean Ruet disrupts natural order to the extent that far-reaching economic and social changes take place, leading eventually to the demise of an entire way of life. Wine, with its warmth and joy, is no longer needed; a subsistence diet of potatoes is sufficient for the survivors who can no longer farm the land:

...Puisqu'il n'y a plus d'hommes,
 Il n'y a plus besoin de vin:
 Arrachez toutes les souches
 Pour chauffer cet hiver
 Vos coeurs deux fois transis.

Vieilles gens de Saint-Ay
 Et de France et d'Europe,
 Soignez pour vivre encore
 Cent pieds de pommes de terre
 Et envoyez vos filles
 Travailler aux fabriques. (59-60)

A sense of closure and unity characterizes the last section of Vildrac's book. "Retour de la guerre" is a three-part poem in which the narrator addresses a poet whose themes and techniques resemble those of Charles Vildrac himself. The poet had dreamed of communicating love's exhilaration through his voice. His songs, sometimes sad but always containing an element of hope, are now tinged with mourning and a sense of outrage. The narrator urges the poet to resist the impulse to flee and remain instead to create new songs to transmit his faith in love. The poet, however, is overwhelmed by five years of war, and he doubts the strength of his own song against evil:

--Y a-t-il un lieu de silence
 Où je puisse essayer mon chant
 Sans que le submerge en moi-même
 Le tumulte des ces orages,
 Les cris aigus de ce prétoire
 Où se proclament par cent voix
 Le mensonge des criminels
 La cupidité des voleurs
 Et la lâcheté des esclaves?...(68)

The narrator's answer is simple and eloquent: as long as one voice of truth remains, then nothing of the truth is lost. In insisting on the invincibility of even a solitary indication of hope, Vildrac reiterates his view that poetry is a manifestation of life and a protector of truth and love:

... --Un seul accent vrai de ton coeur
 En toi couvrira cent voix fausses...

Sur le lourd butin qui t'accable
 Penche-toi! Dans un coeur aimant
 Rien n'est perdu, rien ne s'efface
 De ce qu'y a mis chaque jour. (68-9)

The last poem of *Chants du désespéré*, "Il y a d'autres poèmes," continues Vildrac's emphasis on the necessary role of the individual in preserving love. The poem recounts the development of the book we are now reading in the mind of the poet. He could have filled his book with "pauvres oiseaux sanglants/Aux yeux pleins d'horreur;..." but instead he chose to use his song to nullify the deceit and treachery of those who favored war. The terrible memories of those five years place the narrator in a double bind: he fears he will forget the lesson of the martyrs; yet, at the same time, the emotional burden of their memory is impossible to bear. Vildrac uses the poet/narrator's soliloquy to reaffirm the redemptive power of art and to assert the existence of art as the antithesis of hate.

... La guerre, ah! je la refoule
 En moi chaque jour;
 Une affreuse nostalgie
 Me hante et m'étreint:
 J'attendrai d'en être libre
 Pour ajouter à ce livre;...(72)

The realization of the power of fraternal love for both the individual and the community is the result of the poet's heightened awareness. Reaffirming Tolstoy's concepts, Vildrac underscores love's eternal permanence: love and friendship will form the basis on which a new era of joy will be established:

... Je me délivrerai, amitié, en te chantant;
 Vivace amitié toujours retrouvée
 Dans tous les remous et à tous les vents!...(73)

Although Vildrac published little poetry after *Chants*

du désespéré, his plays and stories continued to center around simple occurrences through which characters came to understand the role of love and friendship in their lives. Vildrac began writing his first successful play, *Le Paquebot Tenacity*, while still at the front. It is the story of two veterans who have shared the full range of war experiences and have decided to go to Canada to begin a new life. The two working-class friends have different personalities: Bastien, adventurous and impulsive, had convinced the dreamy and hesitant Ségard to leave France. Delayed in Marseille while their boat, the *Tenacity*, is repaired, the two men fall in love with the same woman. Bastien deserts his friend to start his life over instead with Thérèse, realizing that he should always seize love whenever it appears, to guard against times, such as the war he had just experienced, when there is a deficit of love. Ségard, helpless, completes alone the trip his friend had planned.

Le Paquebot Tenacity enjoyed a wide success because it captured the reality of chance and uncertainty while reaffirming the possibility of love and happiness in an unstable world. The conflict that these opposing forces caused in people's lives became the subject of Vildrac's subsequent plays. In these works, Vildrac concentrates on relationships between ordinary people in circumstances that could be a part of anyone's life: an estranged brother and sister try to reconcile after a long separation (*Le Pèlerin*), or a young man leaves home to earn enough money to marry and returns to help his love, now married to someone else, make the best of her life (*Michel Auclair*). Vildrac's plays, much like his earlier poems and short stories, are modern parables: powerful vignettes of human relationships, in which the characters gain insight into their own and others' lives. In all of Vildrac's works, it is the ability to love that redeems even the most failed of lives, the importance of caring that fills the void of disappointment and even death, and the image of friendship that may bring peace to the world.

Notes

1. I wish to thank the Vice-President of Academic Affairs and the Faculty Research Grant Committee of Middle Tennessee State University, whose generous support in summer, 1994 and spring, 1995 allowed me to complete this essay.
2. Vildrac himself was not immune from this phenomenon. His first major publication in 1902, *Verlibrisme*, was a sarcastic attack on the *vers libre* and other experiments in poetry. However, Vildrac soon began to modify his views and in 1910 published a book with his brother-in-law, the writer Georges Duhamel, *Notes sur la technique poétique*, in which they advocated a modern poetics based on a fixed number of repeated syllables.
3. Albert Gleizes became one of the founders of cubism; Georges Duhamel would become the world-famous author of two *romans-fleuve* or saga novels; Albert Doyen became the celebrated composer of choral and organ works and the founder of Les Fêtes du Peuple. Even the works of those artists who merely supported the Abbaye's efforts and did not actually live at the run-down former estate at Créteil show the imprint of the group's utopian aesthetics: among them are the playwright and novelist Jules Romains, Léon Bazalgette, the first French biographer and translator of Walt Whitman, the poet Pierre Jean Jouve, and F.T. Marinetti, the Italian poet and later founder of Futurism. Further, several of the members and their friends, including Duhamel and Romains, published their first works at the Abbaye's press and thus were able to launch their long and illustrious literary careers.
4. For a detailed presentation and analysis of French antiwar poetry, see my *En l'honneur de la juste parole* New York: Lang, 1993.
5. Les Amis de Georges Duhamel et de l'Abbaye de Créteil will publish Vildrac's war correspondence with Duhamel in 1996 (*Cahier* 16).
6. Rolland, the celebrated author of *Jean-Christophe* and of biographies of Tolstoy and Beethoven, had a world-wide reputation as an internationalist and humanitarian. His public opposition to the war attracted so much attention that he became the target of prowar nationalists as well as the symbol and catalyst of a world-wide pacifist movement. His articles and essays, published first in the *Journal de Genève*, beginning in September, 1914 and later collected in the volume *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, inspired in particular many young people to work toward ending the war. Writers, soldiers, and many others, including Vildrac, sought his advice and encouragement, either through visits to Geneva, where Rolland lived in self-imposed exile, or by correspondence. Rolland's *Journal des années de guerre 1914-1919* remains an invaluable source for understanding the campaign for peace throughout Europe.
7. Paris: Nouvelle Revue française, 1920. Subsequent citations from *Chants du désespéré* are from this edition.

Works Cited

- Duhamel, Georges. *Le temps de la Recherche*. Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1947.
- Mercereau, Alexandre. *L'Abbaye et le Bolchévisme*. Paris: Figuière, 1922.
- Rolland, Romain. *Journal des années de guerre 1914-1919*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1952.
- Sénéchal, Christian. *L'Abbaye de Crèteil*. Paris: Delpeuch, 1930.
- Tolstoy, Leon. *De la vie*. Trans. by Countess Tolstoy and F. Tastevin. Paris: C. Marpon and E. Flammarion, 1889.
- . *Oeuvres complètes*. Trans. by J.W. Bienstock. Vol. XXVI. *Que devons-nous faire?* Paris: Stock, 1884-85.
- Vildrac, Charles. *Chants du désespéré*. Paris: Gallimard, 1920.
- . *Livre d'amour suivi des premiers vers*. Paris: Seghers, 1959.
- . *Michel Auclair*. Paris: Gallimard, 1948. Vol. 2 of *Théâtre*. 2 vols. 1943-1948.
- . *Le Pèlerin*. Paris: Gallimard, 1948. Vol. 2 of *Théâtre*. 2 vols. 1943-1948.
- . *Le Paquebot Tenacity*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943. Vol. 1 of *Théâtre*. 2 vols. 1943-1948.
- . *Poèmes de l'Abbaye suivis de Esquisse d'un pégase*. Paris: Editions du Sablier, 1925.
- Nancy Sloan Goldberg
Middle Tennessee State University