

Draft of an Historical Picture of Christianity¹

An Homage to Condorcet

Perhaps you noticed something, on the way into this building, which is reminiscent of the events of 2006, 1968, and so on, and perhaps something else as well.

This place is a former Catholic school for students from families without fortunes, founded in 1255 by Saint Louis' Confessor Robert de Sorbon. It furnished an essentially theological education whose importance grew to the point of its assuming the role of ecclesiastic tribunal.

By the end of the 16th century the building, which by then had assumed the name "Sorbonne," was on the verge of collapse until its headmaster in 1622, Armand du Plessis de Richilieu, became its active protector who reconstructed it from top to bottom, laying the first stones for the chapel that would eventually house his tomb on 1-May-1635.

This Cardinal and Minister to Louis XIII could not have envisioned that the Revolutionaries would close the Sorbonne in 1791, and that the little chapel he had chosen as his final resting place would one day be transformed into the temple of the Goddess Reason.

The First Order of the Kingdom of France fell as the 18th century drew to a close: the clergy were constituted as a civil profession, the Church's assets were seized, priests were persecuted, oaths were enforced... The liberation that exploded onto the scene at the end of that century was an extraordinary event that profaned the Church's sacred universe.

What I propose to do today therefore is to try to seek out what otherwise remains hidden in these sacred places, to *pro fanum*, but beyond what is typically meant by this, (a sanctioning for some, impiety and sullyng for others), by instead trying to specify the secular or layman's knowledge (*savoir laïc*)² held to be the origin of our modern era, which first appeared at this end of the 18th Century.

The analytic experience of the transference consistently shows that (in analysis) everything turns around a focal center, but that it may sometimes happen that a revolution starts with the cry that "it is falling" (*ça tombe*)³ rather than "it is turning" (*ça tourne: things change*) plain and simple.

¹ This text is the culmination, written in the time of the aftermath, of what has been said in my 2006-2007 Seminar, "What is Knowledge?," as well as my presentation to the *Insistance* Conference at the Sorbonne on January 27, 2007 entitled "The Century of Mozart and Casanova, in the Shadow of the Enlightenment Philosophers and the French Revolution." The former may be accessed via the "Audios" link on my website www.sonecrit.com, where the latter may also be found via the "Videos" link.

² Which psychoanalysts might be tempted to hear in relation to Freud's article on lay analysis (*analyse 'laïque'*), which also profanes in this precise sense.

³ TR: The reader should note here and in what follows that the French "ça" is also the word for Freud's "Es" (Id). "Ça tombe" therefore not only means "It is falling" or "Things are falling," but also "The unconscious or Es is falling."

In fact the transference is unique in the way it presupposes the existence of a *révolu-tion* (*dream-olution*) in which turning and falling are equivalent, as Newtown already demonstrated in the late 17th century.

The reader should be careful to gauge the full extent of the stakes here, which are foreign to the activity of thinking – an absolute knowledge which we ourselves must nonetheless take into account.

A surprising message for these psychologistic times, when everything is forever explaining itself.

It seems no accident therefore that someone who crossed pretty much every (*toutes*) border in his lifetime was the one who transmitted it to us.

The scenario I propose to explore here is that in the twilight of his life, this voyager who was forever wandering without knowing it, sheltered by the urbane life of the 18th century, was suddenly arrested by an expert in “allness” (*tout*) thirsting for liberty, Mozart.

My plan is to write *what followed* (*la suite*). The publication in 1960 of the original edition of the manuscript to *Story of My Life* (Brockhaus-Plon), which he wrote during the last months of his life, from November 1797 until his death on June 4th 1798, pro-fane our well-known image of him as a libertine. The stakes he laid in this work reveal him to be instead a writer of exception.⁴

This is the trek that truly matters here.

In the summer of 1789, a man, sixty-four years of age, who had agreed to become the librarian for Count Waldstein at his castle in Dux (Bohemia), decided to write the story of the events of his life.

He knew he was a great storyteller, so his idea was to write in order to be able to enjoy *once more* (*encore*) the pleasures he had already known, and in a more novel way so as to write the unpleasures as well.

As the events of which he spoke prove, he remained true to the Stoic slogan taught him by an old Venetian Senator M. di Maliepiro, “Sequere déum,” follow God.

Alone, he set himself the task of producing an account of his conduct, “while I am on the verge of disappearing, like an apprentice waiter to the master-waiter.”

He announced this in elegant fashion: “Member of the *Universe*, I am discoursing with the air.”

He was yet to know that an other kind of enjoyment (*jouissance*), the enjoyment of “jouïe-sens,”⁵ was guiding him – was his true master.

Two years earlier he had paid Mozart a visit, during the time when he was mounting the Prague premiere of *Don Giovanni*. He was yet to know the extent to which the final day of the Don’s life had inspired him.

But as he sat down to write, in Dux⁶ of course, he began to self-master the feeling of being (*sentim’être*)⁷ he had failed to take stock of before.

⁴ “*Casanova l’admirable*” (“The Admirable Casanova”), Philippe Sollers. Folio 2002 ;

⁵ Evading all definition, this neologism of Lacan’s paves the way to all meanings, whereby it is a signifier.

Whereas, a bit later, in the 19th century, a staid professor of French by the name of Jean Laforgues translated his story based on the German translation of his manuscript in a way that blunted the edge of this feeling and even took the further step of suppressing the word *jouissance* (enjoyment) in the text, and thus failed to find the feeling therein.

Censors he had known; hadn't he himself agreed to collaborate with the Venetian Inquisitors what he was *Confidante*?

The memory of this reminded him of other men who had seized power in the name of ending privileges. Only Condorcet had emerged from the French Revolution with a certain dignity intact, in his view.⁸ He still can't understand why he had failed to introduce himself to Condorcet when he had found himself in his company, along with Benjamin Franklin, on November 23, 1783 at the Academy of Sciences.

Perhaps had been too awestruck by the imposing presence of Condorcet's intellect?

And why did Robespierre and the Montagnards reject his Draft Constitution, which he drew up with several friends and had read to the Assembly on February 15, 1793? Probably a settling of scores.

He was not like the other revolutionaries; and he never went to the guillotine. It would not have recognized him.

He grins at this unexpected thought.

Every day for ten full hours he wrote, carried away *again* and *again* by the impulse of the French language he was so adept at making resonate:

"Je baise l'air, croyant que tu y es" (I kiss the air, as if you were there before me.)

A world away from the version produced by Laforgues the censor: *"Je lance mille baisers qui se perdent dans l'air"* ("I launch 1,000 kisses that to the air are lost").

When M.M. sent him this *billet-doux*, did she know what she was in fact giving him was the gift of signifyingness?

A Woman who was "admirable in *all (tout)* she undertook," was even then giving him the present of a presence which was revealing itself to him in that moment, in the words of the Other through which she "ek-sisted."

But what drove him to write in this language which was not his maternal one, and through which an Other "jouië-sens" was revealed, one that is ever-elusive and which transported him beyond his established modes of thinking?

⁶ A word that makes heard the word Duke, the Master.

⁷ TR: "M'être" sounds the same as the French word for Master, "maître." Charmoille has replaced the "ment" of "senti-ment" (feeling) with "senti-m'être," which would roughly translate as the feeling of mastering myself or my own being.

⁸ *Condorcet. Un intellectuel en politique.* (Condorcet. An Intellectual in Politics). Elisabeth Badinter, Robert Badinter. Fayard. 1988.

An Odyssey all his own, a voyage of discovery taken when he was already past sixty.

On April 2nd 1725, Easter Sunday, he was born in Venice and named Giacomo Casanova.

His official father's name was Gaétano, but as it turns out he was the biological son of a certain Grimani, Patrician of Venice. His mother was Zanetta, a beautiful and charming comedienne, who also had a liaison in London with the Prince of Galles that resulted in the birth of a half-brother, François.

But the décor he painted was Other than this, his personal opera staged something greater than the comedy of an amorous liaison which presided over the destiny of a painter of battle scenes.

It had to do with the 15th century itself, and included amongst its antecedents Don Jouan, Master of the Sacred Palace in Rome, Marc-Antoine, a poet, Jacques Casanova, a soldier, and above all, in his father's background, Jacob Casanova, who "stole away a certain D. Anna Palafox from a convent, just one day after she had taken her vows."

With this family novel in hand, he mounted the stage of his life, like an analyzand:

"I suffered from imbecility until I was eight and a half years old. After a three-month long nosebleed I was sent to Padua, where I was cured of my imbecility and devoted myself to learning. When I was sixteen I was made a doctor and donned the habit of a priest before setting off to seek my fortune in Rome."

The essentials in a few short words.

Giacomo's early existence was subject to the gaze of an anonymous knowledge that transfixed him – he was unable to say or remember anything about his life before the age of eight years and four months.

Witness to the nosebleeds which made him frail, his grandmother Marzia, her was her favorite), had the intuition she was in the presence of a boundless intellect.

Without the knowledge of his family, she took him to meet another intellect outside the normal limits, a witch.

This witch locked him in a trunk in which he heard something in her voice that transcended the laughter and tears she was exuding. A new mode of thinking was revealed to him that jarred him awake.

Then she released him from this topographical *cum* topological place, swaddled him, rubbed his neck and temples with a "sweet-smelling" ointment, dressed him, and above all made it clear that his nosebleeds would be thereby reduced under one condition – that he tell no one about what had just transpired. If he agreed, a benevolent lady would visit him the following night.

His thoughts turned to the chronological events of his life:

First, the symbolic call of feminine knowledge which bore him into existence.

Second, his Quest in the Imaginary, from body to body.

Third, the encounter with the Real he experienced in secret upon hearing the overture to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.⁹

Its opening bars resonate in perfect accord with this evocation.

Something resounded within him he had never heard before. He recalled the secret Mozart shared with him concerning the importance of the moment of the aftermath (*temps d'après-coup*) in which the overture first revealed itself to him.¹⁰

He was undergoing the same encounter and nothing was as it was before. *Story of My Life* had become a *writing* on different levels of the same musical score, *soundwriting*, in which all the things he had classified in chronological order were heard "in concert," at one and the same time.

This new tempo enchanted him.

Transported by the music he had heard in Prague, during the Bohemian fall of 1787, he remembered his arrival in Paris.

Prior to it a Frenchwoman in Parma had initiated him into the meaning of love *with* the French and *in* French, *jouissance* of the feminine body, "jouïe-sens" ("I hear meaning") of the body through the tongue, beyond the meaning of the words as such, which she left for him to read on the window of the Hotel Geneva: "Henriette you shall forget too" ("Tu oublieras aussi Henriette").

Fueled by this "last rite" in which he recognized the truth in deception, he traveled to Paris via Lyon, where he joined the Freemasons. An odd trajectory, he grins to himself.

It was his first visit to Paris, and what stunned him the most was the free spiritedness of the Parisians themselves, who enchanted him. He could not understand why Schopenhauer, in the wake of Rousseau, had judged them arrogant. But what difference did it make? In the end he was of the completely opposite opinion!

His greatest joy about being in Paris was finding himself in the omnipresence of women, of their daring, of the spirit and wit they conveyed.

His admiration was total, the way he remembered and recounted the various faux-pas he committed with these elegant, mocking, observant and sharply critical women enchanted him, *even still (encore)*.

The witch who conducted the overture to his own private 'opera' had never left him, the Symbolic hiding place from which the stunned speaking being is able to hear the invocation pressing him to take up speech, the gaze of the gatekeeper of knowledge that then appears.

So it was that one day, at the opera no less, singing with the delightful Venetian accent his voice conveyed, that the windows were "sealed,"¹¹ he suddenly found himself making a riposte to the tit-for-tat of Madame de Pompadour, who was questioning him about Venice: "Venice is not *over* there, (*là-bas*), Madame, but *over* and beyond (*là-haut*)."

⁹ He was not able to speak about it openly because *Story of My Life* ends in 1774. The gap this break in the story introduces enables me to indulge this conceit, whose importance I have already established (see note 10 below).

¹⁰ See my article «Mozart et le cri de Don Juan» ("Mozart and the Cry of Don Juan"), available on my website www.sonecrit.com and in the journal *Insistance* 1, Eres 2005, pp 37-43.

¹¹ TR: "Calfoutrées" (instead of "calfeutrées"). "Foutre" means "to screw."

Venice was ever so close to Venus...

“My life is my subject, my subject is my life.” This was his way of relating the Baroque to the Classical, of conjugating the impossible.

His educational experiences permitted him to be officially labeled a doctor, priest, lawyer, translator, businessman, and other professions still... He ended up being all of them at once.

He did not lack the wherewithal to treat the Patrician Bragadin who had had a stroke in his gondola, and thus found the protector he needed in order to engage in his excesses.

He entertained his interlocutors thanks to his spirit Paralis with whom he communicated, in writing, by transforming letters into numbers.

Ah, the genius of writing! He was forever amazed by it. He sought to make this part of the mark he was leaving from the first lines he set down to paper:

“The doctrine of the Stoics, along with all other sects pertaining to the force of Destiny, is a chimera of the imagination based on atheism. I am not only a monotheist but a Christian strengthened by Philosophy, which never hurt anything.”

Story of My Life thus began with an homage to Christianity, and ended in Latin on the Gospel, *evangelium*,¹² that was his:

“Non erubesco evangelium”

This 17th day of November, 1787, Jacques (James) Casanova.¹³

I do no blush at the gospel I have unearthed: “Profaner!,” cries the defender of the sacred place.

Prudence therefore, let us wait for the last moment to write it. Like Galileo, chastened by the execution of Giordano Bruno, who secretly made his discoveries known to his colleagues by writing in Latin anagrammatic couplets, he revealed nothing.

He put his faith in the following enigmatic and forgotten Biblical saying: “you were not seeking me at all if you have not already found me.” He had been hearing it often for quite some time by that point.

Mozart was right beside him in other words, his presence presented him with the present of a certain presence in the shadow of the Enlightenment Philosophers of the 18th Century.

He had yet to realize this. But now he knew it, it was what drove him to play the violin in his youth. It was this which drove him to return again and again to listen to the music of *Don Giovanni*'s finale. What was he seeking to hear?

¹² A Latin word that stems from the Greek *eu aggelion*, “Good News.”

¹³ This is how he ended his ‘Short Account of My Life’ to Cecile de Roggendorff, just prior to his breaking off the editing of *Story of My Life*, six months before his death.

*A dream-olution (rêve-olution)*¹⁴ which would awaken him, the revolution of the One (*de l'un*).

The *Story* of the private opera that was his life at that time. The stakes that were raised when these three characters, who knew each other all too well, found themselves on the same stage – Monotheism, Christianity and Philosophy – could not have been more acute.

Of course he was known to have interpreted Christianity as a deviation from Judaism by Paul of Tarsus, but such comments were exchanged in private. Thus, not a word of that here.

The credo is what he said openly, as set down and made official edict by the Council of Calcedonia in 451,¹⁵ which each novice must enunciate on the day of his Baptism. This initial proclamation of faith is what binds him to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. He is Christian.

Catholic – the Church is *universal, cath olos, for all*. It is dedicated to converting *all, high and low*; this was its *apostolic* mission which enabled *each and every one* of the members of the Catholic Church to assemble into the *all* of its set.

Holy, the Church consecrates it and is consecrated in it.

And yet where did the Church uncover this its knowledge of the all as summation of the one, of the one as what un-ites? Did she, the mother Church, realize that in French, the language he held so dear, it is the anagram for boredom?

At any rate what is clear is that she has prevailed and that she universally continues – don't all atheists harbor a certain suspicion precisely of the *all*?

He surprised more than one Great Man from that century. In particular he remembered the Deist Voltaire, whom he visited him in 1760 after the encounter with Henriette's writing, still inscribed on the window of that hotel in Geneva.

She knew a thing or two about the *all(ness)* of love.

A world away from the court which the Philosopher surrounded himself with.

The private opera he was hearing had become a *Story* of (the) All, his own. Henriette was the ambassador who led him to other women.

Everyday discourse establishes statistics and makes lists, like Leporello the censor. But with Mozart, Henriette and a few others, this was not the case.

For those able to hear it, *Story of My Life* reveals itself as a kind of interweaving of monotheism, Christianity and Philosophy. This had nothing to do with the ordaining of the Church Fathers of old, or later the new Popes that came out of the woodwork.

¹⁴ TR: the English "dream-olution" does not echo the idea of insistent "return" (mentioned in the previous paragraph) that is conveyed by a "rêve-olution."

¹⁵ I would like to thank Henry Fontana for pointing this out.

He recalled a message left by another great voyager, Paul of Tarsus, who spoke and then wrote, as he had done.

The story is narrated in the *Letter to the Galatians*, written in approximately the year 57 A.D.

Paul has just learned of the deviations applied to his teachings by the preachers of the Law. He does not take time to reflect, as he would just one year later when sending the more tempered sounding *Letter to the Romans*. Immediately, his voice pro-claims:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28, NIV).

Before then he had always thought Paul was simply uttering a Christology, always the same, to the effect that Jesus' death and resurrection saved not only the sinner but *all* (people). The Church had always maintained this interpretation – Jesus' mission was the redemption of sins through grace.

But at that moment a certain twist in Paul's saying had made him hesitate, to wit: three impossibilities, (which he, Paul that is, very well knows are possible in reality), are formulated negatively in order to then be resolved in the affirmation of *all* in *one*.

He was dumbstruck. Everything he had known until then had crumbled. He was unearthing a knowledge that revealed itself to him as being the result of a logical deduction which it was impossible to follow.

What lent it its significance, was that the Church was the one who itself converted him.

Paul was speechless. Henriette grinned. Mozart burst into laughter.

The curtain falls.

The Psychoanalyst applauds. He has seen in all this the secret stakes implied by a *knowledge in the Real*, a knowledge that is said without being spoken and which is often replaced by a *knowledge based on Imaginary ascendancy* which seeks to speak a unique meaning by universalizing the *all*.

He (the Psychoanalyst) appeared, in Freud's wake at the end of the 19th century, in order to counter this.

He knows the importance of the moment in the transference when a torsion occurs that enables an absolute dimension of knowledge to enter the scene, and thereby make it possible for insistent traces of this Real to write unconscious knowledge.

He does not refuse the existence of the sexual difference that attributes a separate place for Men and Women, each with his or her own banner, but the only way he approaches the enigma of the universal is through the experience of discourse.

He is able to know that he who calls himself man (*se dit homme*), de-fames (*dit-fâmmé*) said woman (*dite-femme*), unless unconscious knowledge weaves them together in the torsion that is the universe of love.

Every (*tout*) man is not woman – the right way of saying the fact that the man’s discourse of the *all* (*tout*) leads to the closing-off of the universe of *a* (*une*) woman.

On the one hand The Man, on the other *a*, *one*, woman. How will the encounter between them ever happen?

It will have been necessary for *a* (*une*) women to exist in order for *all* men to be able to accede to a love that is something other than a love of the One (*un*)¹⁶ of Unicity, or any other love for that matter, since their love is a love of the one (*un*) of the Un-ique.

These are the stakes *all* speaking beings face by being torn between the part of them that is related to the *all* of Man, and the part of them that is related to the one (*un*) of *a* (*une*) woman. Modern knowledge may lead in this direction, but subject to the condition that it not demand it as such.

Thus Lacan’s voice echoes from out of the *tele-vision*:

“All women (*toutes les femmes*) are crazy, or so the saying goes. This is why they are not all (*pas toutes*), meaning that they are not *crazies-for-the-all* (*folles-du-tout*), more like accommodated to it, so much so in fact that there would seem to be no limit on the concessions each woman (*chacune*) will make for *one* man – body, soul and goods.”¹⁷

It is amusing to imagine Casanova, who wrote a 150 page letter to Robespierre in 1791, told him of his discovery.

It (*Elle*) never reached its addressee.

The “fake priest,” as Condorcet had baptized him, actively contributed to the instigation of the Terror.

He would be decapitated, as he himself had decapitated the Capets.

Paris, 28-February-2007

Jean Charmoille

¹⁶ TR: The crucial distinction here is based on the “gendered” versions of the word “one,” that is to say between the “one” that a, “une” woman conveys, since “une” is “a” in the feminine, versus that which is related to the Man’s “One” (“un” or “one” in the masculine). Both of these ones, Charmoille is saying, were at stake at different points in Casanova’s life.

¹⁷ Jacques Lacan. *Télévision*. Seuil. P.63-64.