

Louis-Ferdinand Céline on Jean-Paul Sartre 1948

To the Nutcase

Written: by Louis-Ferdinand Céline;

Source: Originally in Albert Paraz, *La Gala des Vaches*, Éditions de l'Élan, Paris, 1948;

Translated: for marxists.org by Mitch Abidor, 2010;

CopyLeft: Creative Commons (Attribute & ShareAlike) marxists.org 2010.

Translator's note: Louis-Ferdinand Céline (1894-1961) published two of the greatest French novels of the twentieth century, "Voyage au Bout de la Nuit" (Journey to the End of the Night) and "Mort à Crédit" (Death on the Installment Plan) in 1932 and 1936. His genius was immediately recognized on all sides, including by Leon Trotsky. The uncompromising misanthropy of these two novels mutated in 1937 into ferocious anti-Semitism in 1937 with the publication of "Bagatelles Pour un Massacre" (Bagatelles for a Massacre), and Céline was now well on his way to his destiny as a collaborationist who attacked the Vichy government for its lack of rigor in its pursuit of the Jews. He fled France for Germany after the Allied debarkation and joined the remains of the collaborationist government in its last redoubt, Sigmaringen in Germany. He later reached Denmark where he served a year in prison for collaborationism, and returned to France in 1951 when he was amnestied, returning to literature and his original career as a doctor.

*"À l'Agité du Bocal" was provoked by an article written by Sartre in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1945 attacking Céline for defending the Nazis for pecuniary reasons. This response originally appeared in 1948 in the book "La Gala des Vaches" by the French writer and defender of Céline, Albert Paraz.*

I don't read much; I don't have the time. So many years already lost in so much foolishness and prison! But people press me, abjure me, badger me. I must, it appears, read a kind of article, the "Portrait of an Anti-Semite" by Jean-Baptiste Sartre (*Temps Modernes*, December 1945). I browse through this long homework assignment, glance at it, it's neither good nor bad, it's nothing at all, a pastiche...a kind of "Copycatwriters"...This little J.B.S. read "L'Étourdi," "The Tulip Lover," etc. He was caught up in them and can't escape...Still in high school, this J.B.S.! Still with his pastiches, with his "copycatworks"... Céline's style too... and many others..."Whores" etc... "Replacement heads"... "Maya"... Nothing too serious, of course. I have a few trailing behind my ass, these "Copycatwriters"... what can I do about it? Suffocating, hateful, half-baked, traitors, half-bloodsucker, half-tapeworm, they don't do me any honor, I never speak of them, and that's all. Children of the shadows. Decency! Oh, I don't wish little J.B.S. any harm! There where he is his fate is cruel enough! Since we're talking about a homework assignment I would give him a seven out of a possible twenty and let's not talk about it anymore... But on page 462 the little turd shocks me! The damned rotten asshole! What does he dare to write? "If Céline supported the socialist theses of the Nazis it's because he was paid." And I quote. Yes! This then is what this little dung-beetle wrote while I was in prison risking a hanging. Filthy little bastard full of shit, you come out from between my ass cheeks to soil me from outside! Cain anus ptoeey! What are you hoping for? That they murder me! It's obvious! Here! Let me squash you! Yes!... I see his photos, those bug eyes...that hook...that slobbering leech...he's a

cestode! What won't he invent, this monster, so that they assassinate me! Barely out of my caca and he denounces me! What's best is that on page 451 he has the venom to warn us: "A man who finds it natural to denounce men can't have our notion of honor. He doesn't even see those for whom he is a benefactor with our eyes; his generosity, his kindness is not like our kindness and generosity: it isn't possible to localize passion."

In my asshole where he can be found we can't ask of J.B.S. too see clearly or to explain himself simply. J.B.S. it seems has nevertheless foreseen the solitude and obscurity of my anus...J.B.S. obviously is talking about himself when he writes on page 451: "This man fears every kind of solitude, that of the genius as well as that of the assassin." Let's understand what this means...Based on the weeklies J.B.S. only sees himself in the skin of a genius. For my part and based on his texts, I am forced to see J.B.S. only in the skin of an assassin, and even more, of a fucking police informant, cursed, hideous, a pain in the ass, rumor monger, a donkey in glasses. Here I am getting carried away! It's not appropriate for my age or condition!... I was going to close here...disgusted, that's all...I think it over...Assassin and brilliant? We've seen this before...After all...Maybe that's the case with Sartre. An assassin he is, he wants to be one, that's understood, but brilliant? Brilliant tiny turd of my ass ? Hmmm?...That remains to be seen...yes, to be sure, that could blossom...make itself known...but J.B.S.? His embryo eyes? His mean and petty shoulders? That fat little gut... and philosopher!...that add up to a lot of things...It seems he freed Paris on bicycle. He played around... at the Theater, the City¹, with the horrors of the era, the war, torture, irons, fire. But times change, and there he is growing, swelling up enormously, J.B.S.! He can't control himself anymore...he no longer knows himself...from the embryo he is he's becoming a creature...the cycle...he's had enough of toys, cheating...he's running after ordeals, real ordeals...prison...expiation... the stick, and the biggest of all sticks, the stake... J.B.S. becomes destiny... the Furies! No more bagatelles... He wants to become a true monster! Now he's yelling at De Gaulle.

What a way of doing things! He wants to commit the irreparable! He insists on it! The witches are going to make him crazy, he came to tease them, they'll never let him go...Tapeworm of a turd, fake tadpole, you're going to eat the mandrake! You'll be promoted to a succubus! The illness of being cursed evolves in Sartre...Old illness, as old as the world, that all of literature is rotted with...Wait, J.B.S. before committing the ultimate mistake! Palpate yourself! Realize that horror is nothing without the Dream and without Music... I clearly see you a tapeworm, but not a cobra, not a cobra at all...no good at the flute! Macbeth is nothing but a Punch and Judy show, and that on a bad day, without music, without dream... You are wicked, filthy, ungrateful, hateful, pig-headed, and that's not all J.B.S.! That's not enough... You have to dance!...I could be mistaken, of course... I couldn't ask for more.. I'll go applaud you when you finally become a true monster, when you'll have paid them, the witches, what you have to, their price, so they transmute you, blossom you, into a true phenomenon. Into a tapeworm that plays the flute.

¹ Parisian theaters

Didn't you ask me directly and through Dullin², through Denoël³, beg me "under the boot" to please come down and applaud you! I didn't find you either danceable or fluteable, a terrible vice in my opinion, I confess... But let's forget all this! Let's only think of the future! Try to have your demons inculcate the flute in you! The flute before all! Later on for Shakespeare, high schooler! $\frac{3}{4}$ of flute, $\frac{1}{4}$ of blood... $\frac{1}{4}$ suffices, I assure you... but first yours before all the other blood! Alchemy has its laws... the "blood of others" doesn't please the Muses... Let's think... even so you had your little success at the Sarah⁴ under the boot with your "Flies"⁵... Can't you now find three little acts, quickly, for the occasion, in a hurry, "The Informants"⁶? A retrospective little revue... We'll see you there in person, with your little buddies, sending your detested colleagues, called "Collaborators," to the penal colonies, to the firing squad, into exile... Would this be comical enough? You, of course, strong in your text in the starring role...as a mocking and philosophical tapeworm... It's easy to imagine a hundred of the most farcical coups de theatre, happenings, and developments in the course of a fairy tale of this kind... and then in the final tableau one of those "general massacres" that would shake all of Europe with mad laughter! (It's about time!) The most joyous of the decade! They'll still be pissing, bungling at the 500th performance! And even beyond... (The Beyond! Ha, ha, ha.) The assassination of the "signatories," all shooting each other!... Yourself by Cassou⁷ ... The latter by Eluard⁸! The other by his wife and Mauriac⁹! And so on until the last one!... Can you imagine!... The hecatomb of apotheosis! Not to mention the flesh, of course!... A great parade of superb, naked, waddling girls... the orchestra of the Grand Tabarin... The jazz band of the "Builders of the Wall" ... "Atlanticist boys" ... assistance guaranteed... and the great orgy of ghosts in luminous double exposure... 200,000 assassinated, prisoners, cholera, unworthy... and women with their heads shaved! Dance the farandole! Heaven's orchestra seats! Chorus of the "Hangmen of Nuremberg" ... And in the tone you see more-than-existence, instantaneist, massacist... Ambience set by hiccoughs of death throes, noises of colics, sobs, metal... "Help!" ... As background noise: "Hurrah machine!" ... You see? And the main attraction, at intermission: auction of handcuffs. And a drink of blood at the snack bar. The absolutist Futurist Bar.

² Charles Dullin (1885–1949) – French actor, director, and theater manager

³ Robert Denoel (1902–1945) – French publisher of Céline's works.

⁴ Parisian theater

⁵ Sartre's play, initially performed in 1942 "under the German boot"

⁶ Untranslatable French play on words: "Les Mouches" (The Flies). "Les Mouchards" (the Informants).

⁷ Jean Cassou (1897–1987) – French writer and Resistance member

⁸ Paul Eluard (1895–1952) – French poet and member of the French Communist Party

⁹ Francois Mauriac (1885–1970) – French writer. Winner of the Nobel Prize in 1952.

Nothing but real blood! By the glass, raw, certified by hospitals... from that very morning! Aortic blood, fetal blood, hymenal blood, blood of the executed!.. For all tastes! What a future! For J.B.S.! What miracles you will do when you will blossom as a True Monster! I already see you out of the asshole, playing the flute, a real little flute! Marvelously!... already almost a real artist!

Damned J.B.S.