

PAUL ELUARD

LES ANIMAUX ET LEURS HOMMES

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AVEC CINQ DESSINS D'ANDRÉ LHOTE



PARIS

COLLECTION DE LITTÉRATURE

AU SANS PAREIL

37, AVENUE KLÉBER

1920

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HOMMES: LES HOMMES ET LEURS ANIMAUX *****

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TABLE DES MATIÈRES

LES ANIMAUX ET LEURS HOMMES

ANIMAL RIT
CHEVAL
VACHE I
PORC
POULE I
POISSON
OISEAU
CHIEN I
CHAT
ARAIGNÉE

LES HOMMES ET LEURS ANIMAUX

MODÈLE
HOMME UTILE
PLUMES
CHIEN II
CONDUIRE
MANGER
MOUILLÉ
PATTE
VACHE II



PRÉFACE

Qu'une force honnête nous revienne.

Quelques poètes, quelques constructeurs qui vécurent jeunes nous l'avaient déjà enseigné.

Connaissions ce dont nous sommes capables.

La beauté ou la laideur ne nous paraissent pas nécessaires. Nous nous sommes toujours autrement souciés de la puissance ou de la grâce, de la douceur ou de la brutalité, de la simplicité ou du nombre.

La vanité qui pousse l'homme à déclarer ceci beau ou laid, et à prendre parti, est à la base de l'erreur raffinée de plusieurs époques littéraires, de leur exaltation sentimentale et du désordre qui en resulta.

Essayons, c'est difficile, de rester absolument purs. Nous nous apercevrons alors de tout ce qui nous lie.

Et le langage déplaisant qui suffit aux bavards, langage aussi mort que les couronnes à nos fronts semblables, réduisons-le, transformons-le en un langage charmant, véritable, de commun échange entre nous.

Pour moi, rien ne me semble meilleur signe de cette volonté que ce poème écrit depuis que je songe à cette page d'ouverture:

SALON

Amour des fantaisies permises,
Du soleil,
Des citrons,
Du mimosa léger.

Clarté des moyens employés:
Vitre claire,
Patience
Et vase à transpercer.

Du soleil, des citrons, du mimosa léger
Au fort de la fragilité
Du verre qui contient
Cet or en boules,
Cet or qui roule.

P. E.

LES ANIMAUX ET LEURS HOMMES

ANIMAL RIT

Le monde rit,
Le monde est heureux, content et joyeux.
La bouche s'ouvre, ouvre ses ailes et retombe.
Les bouches jeunes retombent,
Les bouches vieilles retombent.

Un animal rit aussi,
Etendant la joie de ses contorsions.
Dans tous les endroits de la terre
Le poil remue, la laine danse
Et les oiseaux perdent leurs plumes.

Un animal rit aussi
Et saute loin de lui-même.
Le monde rit,
Un animal rit aussi,
Un animal s'enfuit.

CHEVAL

Cheval seul, cheval perdu,
Malade de la pluie, vibrant d'insectes,
Cheval seul, vieux cheval.

Aux fêtes du galop,
Son élan serait vers la terre,
Il se tuerait.

Et, fidèle aux cailloux,
Cheval seul attend la nuit
Pour n'être pas obligé
De voir clair et de se sauver.

VACHE I

On ne mène pas la vache
À la verdure rase et sèche,
À la verdure sans caresses.

L'herbe qui la reçoit
Doit être douce comme un fil de soie,
Un fil de soie doux comme un fil de lait.

Mère ignorée,
Pour les enfants, ce n'est pas le déjeuner,
Mais le lait sur l'herbe

L'herbe devant la vache,
L'enfant devant le lait.

PORC

Du soleil sur le dos, du soleil sur le ventre,
La tête grosse et immobile
Comme un canon,
Le porc travaille.

POULE I

Hélas! ma sœur, bête bête,
Ce n'est pas à cause de ton chant,
De ton chant pour l'œuf
Que l'homme te croit bonne.

POISSON

Les poissons, les nageurs, les bateaux
Transforment l'eau.
L'eau est douce et ne bouge
Que pour ce qui la touche.

Le poisson avance
Comme un doigt dans un gant,
Le nageur danse lentement
Et la voile respire.

Mais l'eau douce bouge
Pour ce qui la touche,
Pour le poisson, pour le nageur, pour le bateau
Qu'elle porte
Et qu'elle emporte.

OISEAU

Charmée... Oh! pauvre fille!
Les oiseaux mettent en désordre
Le soleil aveuglant du toit,
Les oiseaux jouent à remplacer

Le soleil plus léger que l'huile
Qui coule entre nous.



CHIEN I

Chien chaud,
Tout entier dans la voix, dans les gestes,
De ton maître,
Prends la vie comme le vent,
Avec ton nez.

Reste tranquille.



CHAT

Pour ne poser qu'un doigt dessus
Le chat est bien trop grosse bête.
Sa queue rejoint sa tête,
Il tourne dans ce cercle
Et se répond à la caresse.

Mais, la nuit, l'homme voit ses yeux
Dont la pâleur est le seul don.
Ils sont trop gros pour qu'il les cache

Et trop lourds pour le vent perdu du rêve.

Quand le chat danse
C'est pour isoler sa prison
Et quand il pense
C'est jusqu'aux murs de ses yeux.

ARAIGNÉE

Découverte dans un œuf,
L'araignée n'y entrera plus.

LES HOMMES ET LEURS ANIMAUX

MODÈLE

Les filets des arbres ont pris beaucoup d'oiseaux,
Natures,
Les pattes des oiseaux ont pris les branches sûres
À leurs os.

HOMME UTILE

Tu ne peux plus travailler. Rêve,
Les yeux ouverts, les mains ouvertes
Dans le désert,
Dans le désert qui joue
Avec les animaux—les inutiles.

Après l'ordre, après le désordre,
Dans les champs plats, les forêts creuses,
Dans la mer lourde et claire,
Un animal passe—et ton rêve
Est bien le rêve du repos.

PLUMES

L'homme voudrait être sorti
D'un fouillis d'ailes.
Très haut, le vent coule en criant
Le long d'une aile.

Mais la mère n'était pas là
Quand le nid s'envola,
Mais le ciel battait de l'aile
Quand le nid s'envola.

Et, désespoir du sol,
L'homme est couché dans ses paroles,
Au long des branches mortes,
Dans des coquilles d'œufs.



CHIEN II

Sonnettes, bras ballants, on ne vient pas jusqu'ici,
Sonnettes, portes ouvertes, rage de disparaître.
Tous les chiens s'ennuient
Quand le maître est parti.

CONDUIRE

La rue est bientôt là,
À la rue le cheval.

Plus beau que le corbeau
Il lui faut un chemin.

Fine jambe, léger héros
Qui suit son maître vers le repos.

La rue est bientôt là:
On y court, on y marche, on y trotte,
On s'y arrête.

MANGER

Si vous désirez la lourde chair,
Arrachez les bras, les mains et les doigts,
Déchirez les branches
Qui contenaient le ciel, l'espace.

Et vous tombez, c'est votre poids.

MOUILLÉ

La pierre rebondit sur l'eau,
La fumée n'y pénètre pas.
L'eau, telle une peau
Que nul ne peut blesser
Est caressée

Par l'homme et par le poisson.

Claquant comme corde d'arc,
Le poisson, quand l'homme l'attrape,
Meurt, ne pouvant avaler
Cette planète d'air et de lumière.

Et l'homme sombre au fond des eaux
Pour le poisson
Ou pour la solitude amère
De l'eau souple et toujours close.

PATTE

Le chat s'établit dans la nuit pour crier,
Dans l'air libre, dans la nuit, le chat crie.
Et, triste, à hauteur d'homme, l'homme entend son cri.

VACHE II

Adieu!
Vaches plus précieuses
Que mille bouteilles de lait,

Précieuses aux jeunes qui se marient
Et dont la femme est jolie,

Précieuses aux vieux avec leur canne
Dont la richesse est chair, lait, terre,

Précieuses à ce qui veut bien vivre
De la nourriture ordinaire,
Adieu!

FUIR

L'araignée rapide,
Pieds et mains de la peur,
Est arrivée.

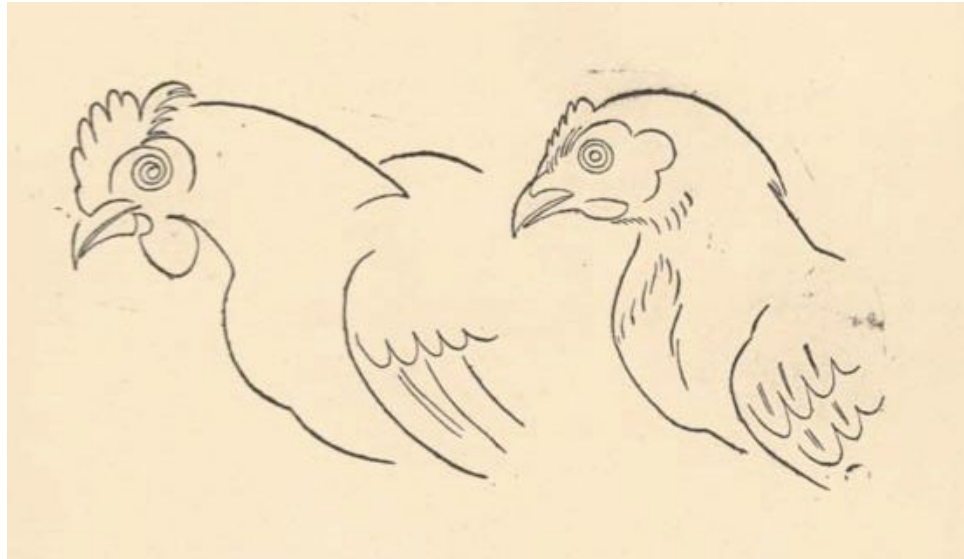
L'araignée,
Heureuse de son poids,
Reste immobile
Comme le plomb du fil à plomb.

Et quand elle repart,
Brisant tous les fils,
C'est la poursuite dans le vide
Qu'il faut imaginer,

Toute chose détruite.

POULE II

Il faut que la poule ponde:
Poule avec ses fruits mûrs,
Poule avec notre gain.



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