

Maurice Aristide Chapelan,
Man of Three Parts

Maurice Aristide Chapelan, Man of Three Parts

By

Mary Munro-Hill

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Maurice Aristide Chapelan, Man of Three Parts

By Mary Munro-Hill

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2019 by Mary Munro-Hill

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-4097-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-4097-2

I dedicate this book to my beloved husband, Thomas Peter Hill, whose memory continues to inspire me, and to Jeanne Cressanges, devoted partner of Maurice Aristide Chapelan.



... la lecture apporte l'eau des autres
au moulin de notre esprit et lui permet de tourner.
H.C.

SELF-PORTRAIT

... la lecture apporte* l'eau des autres au moulin de notre esprit et
lui permet de tourner.

—Maurice Chapelain, *Main courante*, Grasset, 1957, page 58

*The original text reads *amène*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ix
Preface	xi
Acknowledgments	xv
Introduction to the Trilogy	xvii
Man of Three Parts	
Book One: Maurice Chapelan	
Chapter One.....	2
Disciple of Sainte-Beuve; Literary Critic and Aphorist	
Chapter Two	16
Prose works	
Chapter Three	34
Poetry—Classical and Modern	
Book Two: Aristide	
Chapter One.....	48
<i>Censeur solide et salutaire</i> (1961-1985)	
Chapter Two	60
<i>Chroniqueur souriant</i> (1986-1992)	
Chapter Three	73
<i>Grammairien original</i>	

Book Three: Aymé Dubois-Jolly

Chapter One.....	86
<i>Les Romains galants</i>	
Chapter Two.....	133
<i>Les Confessions</i>	
Chapter Three.....	175
<i>Le petit oiseau d'Anatole</i>	
Conclusion to the Trilogy.....	205
Three Writers in one Man	
Appendix I.....	216
Appendix II.....	223
Appendix III.....	230
Appendix IV.....	232
Appendix V.....	237
Appendix VI.....	238
Appendix VII.....	246
Select Bibliography.....	251
General Bibliography.....	253
Book One.....	253
Book Two.....	253
Book Three.....	254
Index.....	256

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece: Maurice Aristide Chapelan: self-portrait, line-drawing

Maurice Aristide Chapelan: self-portrait, charcoal sketch

Maurice Aristide Chapelan: photograph, Coye-la-Forêt, 1989 © T P HILL

Aristide and the author: photograph, Coye-la-Forêt, 1987 © T P HILL

Aymé Dubois-Jolly and the author: photograph, Coye-la-Forêt, 1989
© T P Hill



MAURICE ARISTIDE CHAPELAN
(SELF-PORTRAIT)

PREFACE

Le Diable, comme Dieu—« en trois personnes ». MAC.

—Maurice Chapelan, personal letter to the author, 16 August 1986.

Being a passionate Francophile from my first French lesson, it was inevitable that I should choose to study the subject at university. Since then, I have taught French at secondary and tertiary levels, never ceasing to read and to speak the language with relish, and always paying particular attention to any linguistic changes I have noticed.

My interest in Maurice Chapelan was sparked by his amusing *chroniques de langue* in *Le Figaro littéraire*, which I read avidly from 1961, never imagining that I would ever meet ‘Aristide’. I had always enjoyed such *chroniques* in the French press and looked forward to my annual visits to France, when I would immerse myself once more in such articles. In 1986 I submitted a dissertation on Chapelan’s grammatical work (‘Aristide of *Le Figaro*’) for my MA at the University of Hull, and in 1994 my PhD thesis dealt not only with Aristide but with his *confrères*, his contemporaries and his predecessors—all writers of *rubriques langagières* in the French press.

When Maurice Aristide Chapelan replied to my letter in January 1986 he signed himself irreverently and humorously as *MAC, le Diable, comme Dieu, en trois personnes*, words he would repeat in a later letter. This was Chapelan, the serious writer of poems, aphorisms, anecdotes, *récits*, literary criticism and biography; Aristide, *chroniqueur*, resident grammarian at *Le Figaro*; Aymé Dubois-Jolly, author of *romans galants*. I was intrigued and looked forward to meeting him and to reading some of his other work, none of which I had yet encountered.

On my first visit to Coye-la-Forêt in the August of 1986, Chapelan gave me copies of all his main published works, including the four Aymé Dubois-Jolly books, which were of a markedly different nature from the rest of his literary output and, sad but predictable to relate, the only items to have proved financially profitable to him.

Of his conventional, mainstream writing, I would recommend to anyone embarking on a serious study of Chapelan the following books: his two principal autobiographical works, *Mémoires d’un voyou* and *Rien n’est jamais fini*; his reflections on literature, in *Lire et écrire*, and his random thoughts and aphorisms in *Main courante* and *Amours, Amour*.

For readers especially interested in his poetry, I would propose, as being representative of his work, the verses included in the latter part of his short *roman vécu*, published in 1990, *Amoroso*, as well as his long poem *Amante en abîme*, written in two versions, classic and modern.

His *romans galants*—or *romans polissons*, as he called them—are foreshadowed in his poems and elsewhere in his writing, and are written to entertain and amuse rather than to titillate. Privately, Maurice Chapelan was an entertaining man, some of whose spontaneous puns were remembered many years later by friends and neighbours. An elderly, life-long resident of Coye-la-Forêt, who had known him well, recalled in 2009, shortly before her death, how Chapelan had kept her amused while she was wall-papering his house: « *Micheline, tapissez partout !* » he had told her, and she had howled with laughter. Micheline was a former dress-maker who had become a house-decorator; she did wall-papering in the houses of many residents of Coye and the surrounding area, including Chapelan's residence in la rue Blanche. She had quoted him in an interview with the local online newspaper *Quoi de neuf à Coye ?* seventeen years after the death of the inimitable, unforgettable Chapelan.

As his *romans galants* are somewhat lacking in plot, they could be said to lie somewhere between erotica and soft pornography, probably closer to the latter. Chapelan invited me to translate them into English for him, but the idea did not appeal to me. Being a licensed lay minister in the Church of England, I was reluctant to study too closely such dubious material, no matter how stylishly expressed in eighteenth-century prose style these works undoubtedly were. Although Chapelan was visibly disappointed, he understood my situation and respected my decision. The first of these *romans galants*, bearing the amusing title *Les mémoires d'une culotte*, had been made into a film in 1981, though with a completely different name: *Les folies d'Élodie*.

At our first encounter, following a busy seven-month correspondence, Chapelan was thrilled to receive a bound copy of the dissertation I had written about his work as *chroniqueur du langage* at *Le Figaro* for my MA at the University of Hull. That meeting was the beginning of a close friendship between us, which would last until his death in 1992. It is a pity that he did not live to see my PhD thesis (1994), which inspired my first book, *Aristide of Le Figaro* (Cambridge Scholars 2017), written to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death.

Our friendship was surprising, since Chapelan and I were fundamentally different from each other, except for our shared love of the French language. Unlike me, he was openly irreverent and lampooned the Church and the clergy mercilessly. As a child, he had undergone some

unpleasant experiences at the hands of priests (*c'est bien le cas de le dire*), on account of which his schooldays at a private *collège* had been a nightmare to him and a trauma which had aroused in him a deep hatred of Roman Catholicism and its hierarchy, echoed strongly in his Aymé Dubois-Jolly books. An especially harsh blow in later life—the loss of his only son— did little to confirm any residual belief he might otherwise have had in a God of love. Yet, at times, he expressed thoughts which betrayed his Christian upbringing, albeit mostly dark ideas relating to the end of all things. Violent storms made him think apocalyptically. Strange to relate, he tended towards spiritualism, a fact which he himself admitted was inconsistent with his avowed atheism (or agnosticism, perhaps).

My husband, Peter, and I were always made most welcome at Coye-la-Forêt and, through knowing Chapelan, we became friends with Jeanne Cressanges, his *compagne* for many years and a fellow-writer of distinction, with whom I still correspond. Jeanne and I met again in Paris in November 2017, when she was delighted to receive a copy of *Aristide of Le Figaro* and was most enthusiastic about my proposed book, this present volume, *Maurice Aristide Chapelan, Man of Three Parts*.

It was always amusing to be with Chapelan, as he joked most of the time, usually, though not exclusively, about religion and sex, savouring, along with his hearers, the *jeux de mots* and *contrepets* he injected into every conversation. In earlier days, before serious illness struck, he used to amuse the waiters in the local cafés and restaurants at Coye, regaling them with the most outlandish accounts of the many escapades he had enjoyed during his make-believe life as a double-agent in Russia. He could have been a stand-up comedian.

It was indirectly thanks to my work on Aristide that I would later have the honour of meeting, *sous la Coupole*, Jean Dutourd and Maurice Druon, both of whom, in common with Chapelan himself and my husband, Peter, have long since departed this life. Attending *la séance exceptionnelle* of the *Académie française*, held on Thursday 26 May 1994, in celebration of the 300th anniversary of *le Dictionnaire*, was one of the most memorable experiences of my life. The event took place not only in the company of *les Immortels* themselves but in the presence of *défenseurs de la langue française*, specialist linguists, from all over the world, representatives from twenty-eight countries, and many prominent public figures, including such dignitaries as Édouard Balladur, *premier ministre* at the time, and the British and American ambassadors: « *une assemblée de qualité* », as *Le Figaro* described the gathering in its report of the occasion on Friday 27 May.

During his long career as writer, publisher and journalist, Maurice Aristide Chapelan had met all the foremost authors and celebrities of the day. He proudly displayed photographs in his study, some showing him in conversation with famous people he had interviewed for *Le Figaro*: such disparate personalities as Colette, Brigitte Bardot and Jacques Brel. Other photographs showed him with Bernard Pivot, on the television, and with Jacques Chancel, on the radio.

Although highly regarded and respected by his fellow-writers in France, Chapelan was relatively unknown in the English-speaking world, except among those scholars specialising in French literary criticism and contemporary literature. His work as Aristide, grammarian at *Le Figaro*, was better known, especially to those British Francophiles who, like me, eagerly read his weekly *chronique* while on holiday in France. Those articles appeared regularly from April 1961 to January 1992, a few weeks before he died.

Like my two earlier books, *Aristide of Le Figaro* and *Claude Duneton, Chroniqueur at Le Figaro*, this volume is intended not only for the general reader with a sound knowledge of French language and culture but also for academic researchers. This specific volume seeks to introduce the whole of Maurice Chapelan's *œuvre* to a wider readership, both at home and abroad, and it will be noticed that Book Three, on the relatively unknown third *persona* of Chapelan, Aymé Dubois-Jolly, is much longer than either of the other two.

Although it would be valuable to have the text before them, readers will, I hope, find the extracts I have selected useful in the absence of the books themselves. Most of Chapelan's later publications are still in print, and the others are easily obtainable through second-hand booksellers. In 2019 it is gratifying to see so many of his witty and wise aphorisms quoted on sites of *Citations* on the Internet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge my indebtedness to all who instilled in me an awareness and a love of language and literature: John Munro, my father, Joan Munro, my mother, Ronald Bratley, lay minister (Reader) in the Church of England, and my teachers, especially Mr Jack Lee, Mlle Marguerite Canel, Mrs Nancy Battarbee (later Grewe) and Miss Helen Thompson. I thank also Sophie Edminson and Courtney Blades of Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their kind assistance in the preparation of this volume.



MAURICE ARISTIDE CHAPELAN
COYE-LA-FORET 1989

INTRODUCTION

Comment aimerais-je écrire ? Avec la bonhomie de Montaigne, la profondeur de Pascal, l'esprit de Voltaire, la verve de Diderot, la nature de Stendhal, la délicatesse de Joubert, la subtilité de Valéry... Davantage : un je ne sais quoi, qu'il ne m'appartient pas de définir, mais que je voudrais bien voir les autres voir dans ce que j'écris.

—Maurice Chapelan, *Lire et écrire*, Grasset, 1960, page 155.

This present work, a one-volume trilogy, is intended to bring to the notice of all lovers of French language and literature, as well as French specialists in Britain and elsewhere in the English-speaking world, the whole *œuvre* of the versatile Maurice Aristide Chapelan, in his three *personae*: Maurice Chapelan, Aristide and Aymé Dubois-Jolly.

It is often recommended that the introduction should be read only after the reader has finished the book; perhaps the same advice should be given to writers, since the original intentions of the author, as set out in the introduction, sometimes fail to materialise in the manner expected. In the case of this volume, it became clear to me, as I wrote, that my initial proposal, which had been to compose a work consisting of three books of similar length, each divided into three equal chapters, would not prove possible. The fact that Book Three, concerning Chapelan's third *persona*, Aymé Dubois-Jolly, contains more than twice the amount of material foreseen, should perhaps be perceived not as a failure but rather as a desirable and valuable divergence. Conversely, I realised, following the completion of this trilogy, that some aspects of Chapelan's literary output had been handled cursorily and merited treatment in greater depth. It has not been possible here to do more than introduce the reader to the *œuvre* of Maurice Aristide Chapelan. My earlier book, *Aristide of Le Figaro* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), provides a detailed study of Chapelan's grammatical work and includes additional biographical information, which any interested researcher or general reader will find useful. In a subsequent book or books I hope to present a more comprehensive study of his poetry, which was his first literary passion and deserves to be known and appreciated more widely, and of his aphorisms.

When we consider Maurice Chapelan, the distinguished literary critic, aphorist, biographer and poet, we have the entirety of his published work to inform us, a corpus which defines him with the utmost clarity; in fact,

he invariably remarked, in answer to any question regarding his past, « *C'est tout dans mes livres* ». Such is indeed the case, since it is not only in his two autobiographies, *Mémoires d'un voyou* and *Rien n'est jamais fini*, that we discover the essence of the man and his life-story, but in almost every word he wrote, especially in his poetry and aphorisms. Of his other well-known *persona*, Aristide, we have a wealth of information at our disposal: the thousands of *chroniques du langage* he wrote for *Le Figaro* and *Le Figaro littéraire* as well as his volume of selected articles, *La langue française dans tous ses débats*. For those wishing to read a more detailed account of Aristide, there is my book *Aristide of Le Figaro*, mentioned earlier. It is therefore appropriate that this one-volume trilogy should offer more about the relatively unknown third *persona*, Aymé Dubois-Jolly.

Maurice Aristide Chapelan, in common with most authors, was driven by a passionate desire to write and by a correspondingly fervent hope of being read. As well as wishing to be considered original, he sought, as we read in the epigraph, to emulate the distinctive qualities of the best writers. Through his two specifically autobiographical works we learn much about Chapelan and his family background: his early years, his troubled childhood and adolescence, his growing interest both in writing and in women, and, eventually, his more mature reflections, in late middle age, on his life and career as an established man of letters. We recognise in his youthful aspirations—influenced on the one hand by his own wide reading, including his special study of eighteenth-century literature, and on the other by his mother's poetic work, which he would later come to despise for its affectation and pretentiousness—the inevitability of a writing career.

In this one-volume trilogy the three-fold nature of his literary character will be explored. As would be anticipated, I wish to introduce Maurice Aristide Chapelan to those who have never read his books, though they may have come across him as *critique littéraire* at *Le Figaro*, from 1947, or as Aristide, resident grammarian and *chroniqueur de langue* at *Le Figaro littéraire*, from 1961, until shortly before his death in 1992.

Each book consists of three chapters. In Book One we shall explore Maurice Chapelan, the accomplished writer of prose and verse; Book Two will consider the work of Aristide, the grammarian; in Book Three I shall endeavour to present as comic, satirical literary works his four *romans galants*, which I believe few anglophone readers will have encountered.

Maurice Aristide Chapelan, recognised by his contemporaries as a gifted and versatile writer with a remarkably wide-ranging *œuvre*, received

many accolades during his long career, including several awards from the *Académie française*, to which we shall refer in the course of this work.

For the time being, it is my hope that the Preface and this brief Introduction will serve as a springboard for the exploration and appreciation of what follows. I have endeavoured to avoid translation, preferring to comment and, where appropriate, summarise.

As always, I wish my readers *Bonne lecture* !

BOOK ONE

MAURICE CHAPELAN

CHAPTER ONE

DISCIPLE OF SAINTE-BEUVE: LITERARY CRITIC AND APHORIST

Excellentes, les œuvres qui nous mettent en appétit d'écrire : non pas comme elles, comme nous ; qui nous donnent une méthode, non point une formule, et nous excitent à notre vérité.

—Maurice Chapelan, *Lire et écrire*, Grasset, 1960, page 39.

From a study of his work, especially *Lire et écrire*, *Mémoires d'un voyage* and *Rien n'est jamais fini*, we learn of the many influences that formed and informed the writer Maurice Chapelan. As a child he was already an avid reader and had access to his grandfather's vast library, where he discovered the literature which would exert one of the strongest influences on him: that of the eighteenth century.

By the time he was twenty-six and living in Paris, as we learn from *Rien n'est jamais fini* (1977: 127), the books on his bedside table included the following: the poetry of Baudelaire, Pascal's *Pensées*, his copies of *Littre* and Chapsal (*Syntaxe française*), the works of Montaigne, Chamfort and Rivarol, and signed copies of books by friends. Later he would turn his attention to Lichtenberg, Léautaud, Jouhandeau, Maine de Biran, Jules Renard, Montherlant, Paul Valéry, Henri-Frédéric Amiel, Max Jacob, Paul Éluard, Jean Dutourd, André Gide, Sainte-Beuve, and numerous others, but especially to those who, like Gide and Sainte-Beuve, had kept a *journal*. Indeed, his special interest in the *journal intime* would lead him to publish in 1947 a collection of extracts from such diaries in his *Anthologie du Journal intime*, which was the only work of its kind and for which he received the *Prix Lange* in 1950. An appreciative review appeared in the University of Oxford journal *French Studies*, on 1 July 1949, where P Mansell Jones commented in glowing terms on its originality, describing Chapelan's fifty-page introduction as 'one of the most intelligent considerations of the *journal intime*' he had ever read. Alain Girard, too, reviewed the anthology in 1949 in the *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* (see Appendix I), concluding that the author draws *une leçon d'énergie* from the selection of texts he presents to us:

Il a sûrement raison. Si souffrants et contempteurs d'eux-mêmes qu'ils soient, les intimistes sont tout de même parvenus à édifier une œuvre et à construire leur vie.

As early as 1934 Chapelan, who was already a published poet, had launched a poetry review, *Le Beau Navire*, its title inspired by Baudelaire's poem of that name. Maurice Chapelan was the director of the publication (1977: 259), which appeared only nine times: in the years 1934 and 1935 and then, after a break, in 1939, though in a slightly different form. A quarrel with his fellow-poet Philippe Chabaneix, a disagreement which alienated him at the same time from his friend Robert Houdelot, meant that the review was no longer viable. During its short life, it attracted contributions from many burgeoning poets (including Maurice Chapelan himself, writing under the pseudonym of Charles Mouron), some of whom would become household names in various literary *genres*, not in poetry alone: Jacques Audiberti, Luc Estang, Patrice de La Tour du Pin and Maurice Fombeure, to mention but a few.

André Salmon had written a highly complimentary review of *Le Beau Navire*, Maurice Chapelan's first venture into publishing, in *Le Figaro littéraire*, comparing its director to the great Alfred Valette [*recte* Vallette]. Bound sets of *Le Beau Navire* are still to be found in 2019 and, according to Chapelan (1977: 264), were already highly prized by book-lovers and accruing value in the 1970s. Issue number seven of the nine editions was particularly important as it included an encouraging and sympathetic (though strangely nostalgic and pessimistic) introduction by the eminent author, François Mauriac, who addressed his words *Aux poètes du Beau Navire*:

Sur ce « beau navire » j'ai été mousse, il y a vingt-cinq ans. Les visages changent, mais de génération en génération le même équipage, avec la même passion, interroge les astres. Et quand nous sommes fatigués d'attendre la réponse et que nous regardons autour de nous, le temps a passé, la jeunesse est finie. Voilà la dernière escale : celle de l'âge mûr. Que nous y accueillent ou non les flonflons de la réussite, la même ténèbre se referme qui recouvre à jamais nos jeunes cœurs attachés à une chair déjà corrompue et presque détruite.

With his habitual diffidence, Chapelan refuses to take credit for such a distinguished contribution, saying that it was his friend Louis Piéchaud who had invited Mauriac to write for the review. Chapelan is anxious to point out that Mauriac was only fifty-four years of age when he wrote the piece, which ended thus:

Le Beau Navire, pour le plaisir de Dieu, chargé de toute la souffrance et de toute la passion des jeunes gens, donne ce « témoignage » dont parle Baudelaire, d'une dignité qui nous accable, parce qu'elle nous interdit le repos dans l'abaissement.

This final comment almost certainly reflects the experience of Mauriac's son, Claude, who had struggled with the anguish of despair from an early age. Unlike his father, who had a strong Christian faith, Claude had no religious belief, and this absence was discernible in his writing, which was based largely on the diary he had kept from his adolescence. Chapelan, who had read Claude's *Journal*, had found it *d'une sincérité poignante*. Claude would continue to keep a *journal* until his death in 1996.

In a carefully compiled text-book, *André Gide : Journal* (Didier, 1970), intended for senior pupils and undergraduates, the author Lucien Adjadi, *Inspecteur de l'Éducation Nationale* and prolific writer of scholastic works on literature, offers for analysis extracts from the *Journal* of one of the foremost diarists of the twentieth century, Gide, inviting literary critics of the day, including Maurice Chapelan, who was now aged fifty-four, to consider and evaluate the place of the *journal intime* in French literature. It is useful to us, in the context of this present work, not only to read what Chapelan has to say on the subject under the heading *Le journal n'est pas un genre littéraire* but also to examine his own classification of such writing, being himself a *diariste*:

Le journal intime n'appartient à aucun des « genres » reconnus officiellement en littérature : roman, conte, nouvelle, élégie, épopée, comédie, tragédie, etc. Il n'obéit donc à aucune règle. Cependant, il figure dans le monde des lettres, mais comme une production en marge des œuvres véritables, des créations artistiques. Son intérêt, toutefois, n'est pas seulement dû à la célébrité de son auteur.

The description provided here by Chapelan derives from his own study of the work of many *intimistes*. He himself kept a diary throughout his life as a writer, a record which provided him with two almost ready-made autobiographies and served as an indispensable source-book for his many aphorisms and reflexions on life and literature. Under that same heading, *Le journal n'est pas un genre littéraire*, Chapelan continues his definition of the *journal intime*:

Dans son essence même, il est une confession permise de soi à soi, une suite très libre de notes prises « sur le vif », sans souci de publication, en vue peut-être d'un livre à faire ou, plus couramment, dans l'intention de

consigner des observations personnelles—commentaires et remarques sur les êtres et sur les événements—qu'il faut sauver de l'oubli.

It is more than likely that the *journal intime* was preoccupying Maurice Chapelan himself at this time: he had done precisely what he describes in the foregoing paragraph, *en vue peut-être d'un livre à faire*, using his daily jottings in his reminiscences, since it was during this same period that he was compiling his *notes prises « sur le vif »* in preparation for the publication of his first autobiography, *Mémoires d'un voyou* (1972). He aptly defines the process involved in keeping a diary:

*Au fil des jours, l'auteur d'un journal intime—écrivain ou non—recueille, en les faisant précéder d'une date, des impressions, des sensations, des émotions, ses déceptions, ses peines, ses enthousiasmes. Il se livre tout entier, avec la plus totale sincérité—son « cœur mis à nu »—comme s'il confiait ses plus inavouables faiblesses, ses repentirs, ses projets à un **confident muet**..., puis conserve par-devers lui—à l'abri de toutes les indiscretions—ce document **secret**.*

Chapelan uses bold lettering here, both for the expression *confident muet* and for the final word of the paragraph, *secret*, thus emphasising the personal and private nature, the essential intimacy of the *journal*:

Le véritable journal intime ne devrait, par conséquent, être connu d'aucun lecteur puisqu'il n'est pas destiné à la publication.

Then, in endorsement of this paragraph and of his previous remark on the notes taken by a diarist, *sans souci de publication*, he asserts:

Le journal intime s'affirme le moins littéraire des genres pour l'excellente raison qu'il n'en est pas un, ou plutôt ne devrait pas l'être, et d'ailleurs ne l'était point originellement, pas plus et moins encore que la lettre, puisqu'il ne présuppose pas même un lecteur.

In Adjadi's book (1970: 9), Chapelan comments on another famous diarist, Henri-Frédéric Amiel, a writer whose work he knows well and someone to whom he refers frequently in his own writing and whose vast work (16,900 pages) is known to us only by the three or four volumes extant of *Fragments d'un journal intime*. He describes Amiel's *Journal* thus: *Il s'agit d'un monument unique dans les lettres françaises*, adding, in response to Adjadi's section on the reasons for the present popularity of the diary:

Le journal s'accorde parfaitement avec les tendances actuelles les plus profondes... Pour les individualistes qui souffrent..., pour les consciences blessées et les esprits libres, nul doute que le journal intime ne soit le suprême refuge.

The *journal intime* was, naturally, of particular interest to a writer such as Chapelan, himself a life-long *diariste*. As we saw earlier, he produced in 1947 a selection of excerpts from the diaries of celebrated writers in his *Anthologie du journal intime*, though this was not his first published anthology, as his *Anthologie du poème en prose* had appeared the year before and was to be republished in 1959.

Between 1946 and 1954 Maurice Chapelan's writing was at its most scholarly. Although he had read law at the University of Toulouse, his legal studies left no mark on his literary work. Like one of his greatest heroes, Sainte-Beuve, who had read medicine, only to abandon it for his true passion, literature, Chapelan had turned his back on the law to embrace a literary career. One of his early books, published in 1954, was a study of the work of Sainte-Beuve, an anthology bearing the title *Sainte-Beuve : Pensées et maximes*, an academic study, richly annotated, which brought together items which had been hitherto dispersed. For this work he received in 1960 the *Prix Broquette-Gonin (philosophie)*. In Chapelan's own words (1977: 152), the collection *permet pour la première fois de mesurer dans son ampleur l'importance du moraliste*. Chapelan sees himself as both *moraliste* and, to use his own term, *humoraliste*.

Although he writes in *Rien n'est jamais fini* (1977: 152) of his career to date, referring to his two anthologies and to his work on Sainte-Beuve, he seems to discount *Sylvère*, his novella, as well as his contributions to *Le Beau Navire*, his other poems and all the articles of literary criticism he had written for *Le Figaro* since 1947, and his grammar articles since 1961:

Écrivain tardif (cinquante et un ans) et discret, j'ai publié six ouvrages de 1957 à 1973. Auparavant, j'avais donné deux anthologies, restées uniques en leur genre, et assuré l'édition, en un volume, des Pensées jusqu'alors dispersées de Sainte-Beuve, qui permet pour la première fois de mesurer dans son ampleur l'importance du moraliste.

We know from Maurice Chapelan's writing that he was not only interested in *les moralistes*, including Cyril Connolly, the English critic and aphorist, but placed himself in that category, though, as mentioned above, he often called himself an *humoraliste*, one of the three words he claimed to have invented (although *humoraliste* has been used by Philippe Bouvard and others without any such attribution). He mentioned it to me in his letter of 15 May 1986, some weeks before our first meeting, defining it clearly:

Vous avez tout deviné de moi : je suis bien un fervent d'humour noir, cette conjuration de l'horreur par le rire, ce que j'appelle un « humoraliste ».

It was therefore most unfortunate when Jean Dutourd's tribute to Maurice Chapelan (*Le Figaro*, 25 March 1992) was rendered nonsensical by a serious error, almost certainly the result of a misprint rather than a mistake on the part of the *Académicien*:

Il avait inventé un mot heureux pour se désigner : *amoraliste* [sic], ce qui, en somme, le peint très bien.

Chapelan's whole *œuvre* reveals a *moraliste* using dark humour, influenced by others such as Sainte-Beuve, and by Cyril Connolly, to whom he frequently referred approvingly in conversation.

His perfunctory treatment of his own early works is an indication of his intrinsic modesty. His first love had always been writing, and he recounts (1972: 339 and 1977: 144-145) how in 1933, at the age of 27, he had written an essay, *Baudelaire et Pascal*, which he had submitted to Fernand Vandérem, a novelist and dramatist, who was also a literary critic at the distinguished *Journal des Débats* and had a special interest in Baudelaire. Within a few days Vandérem had invited Chapelan to come to see him. During their meeting Vandérem informed him that he had forwarded the essay to the *Académicien* Marcel Prévost for publication in the prestigious *Revue de France*, adding: « Jeune homme, je ne devrais pas vous le dire, mais vous avez beaucoup de talent ». Although Prévost did not in the event share his friend's particular admiration of Chapelan's thirty-page essay, he was happy to accept it for publication, and the dissertation appeared on 1 November of that year. A few days later *Le Figaro*, which was to play such a significant role in his life—little did he know it at the time—published an excellent review of his *Baudelaire et Pascal* in its weekly *supplément littéraire*. This was Maurice Chapelan's first contact with the newspaper.

Earlier still, in 1930, he had published his novella, *Sylvère*, at his own expense, and in 1944 his *Nada, poème* had appeared, dedicated to Luc Estang and later included with two more of his poems at the end of his *Amoralités familiales*. His first major work of literary criticism had been published by Julliard in 1946, the copyright passing to Grasset in 1959: this, as we saw earlier, was his *Anthologie du poème en prose*, a unique work of reference at the time. The book was reviewed in 1948 by Henri Fluchère in the University of Oxford *French Studies* journal and by Yves-Gérard Le Dantec in the October 1948 edition of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The year 1947 had seen the publication of his other critical

collection, his *Anthologie du journal intime*, which remained the only work of its type until that published by Philippe Lejeune and Catherine Bogaert in 2006, *Le Journal intime*.

It may be that he was too ashamed of his first book, *Sylvère*, barely a hundred-and-fifty pages long and privately published, to refer to it, yet that work is of pivotal significance to us, as traces of it are to be found in his later writing, and the style is already unmistakably his. He was less ashamed of the first poem he had published, *Nada*, which prefigured much of his mature verse.

As we have noted, among the writers who most influenced Chapelan, especially in his work as literary critic and creator of aphorisms, was Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve. When thwarted in his original ambition to become a creative writer, poet and novelist, Sainte-Beuve had turned his attention to literary criticism, for which category of writing he was soon to be considered a genius by many. Although his method was the subject of controversy, his work remains highly regarded by some to this day. Although literary criticism may not have been Sainte-Beuve's preferred *genre*, his work was to become of seminal importance in the history of French literature, since he introduced a completely fresh approach to the task. Chapelan respected his work and shared his understanding of the art of *la critique littéraire*.

Until the arrival of Sainte-Beuve, literary criticism had been a relatively undemanding, humdrum exercise, consisting of classifying a book and judging its literary worth as good, bad or indifferent. Sainte-Beuve would bring about a profound change, since his method entailed shedding further light on the work under review through a detailed study of the background of the writer, his or her life and experiences, and identifying the purpose of the book. Besides undertaking such an exhaustive study of the author, Sainte-Beuve would compare the particular work in question with that of other writers, those currently active in France as well as those of other times and other places. Literary criticism thus found itself transformed, since with Sainte-Beuve it had become a quasi-*genre* in its own right and acquired a hitherto unimagined status.

It is therefore not surprising that such extensive and comprehensive study brought with it an immense intellectual challenge, since a literary critic of this order must appreciate not only the work of a writer but also the history, geography, sociology and even psychology behind it, in addition to the vast world of literature in which it was situated. As the initiator of this form of literary criticism, Sainte-Beuve demonstrated an original mind as well as wide learning, a fine style, sound judgment and impeccable taste. Literary criticism had been raised to new heights and

would never be the same again. Inspired by his work, Maurice Chapelan eventually produced his collection, *Sainte-Beuve : pensées et maximes*, which would influence his own writing, not only as a literary critic but also as an aphorist.

Working for both *Le Figaro* and the publisher Bernard Grasset, not only as the latter's private secretary but also as his *éditeur littéraire*, Maurice Chapelan acquired a capacity for critical reading, writing reviews of books, new and old, and selecting and recommending works for publication. In the book *Bernard Grasset* by Jean Bothorel (1989), Maurice Chapelan is mentioned many times and his close relationship with the publisher is much in evidence. Grasset was not a particularly easy man with whom to work, but Chapelan had the knack of humanising him and humouring him, handling sensitive situations with tact and diplomacy. In the account of one of her early interviews with Grasset, before her book *Les héros sont fatigués : visages du Libéria* was accepted for publication in 1953, Christine Garnier (the pseudonym used by Raymonde Germaine Cagin) mentions the presence of Maurice Chapelan at that meeting and on other occasions. Despite their different personalities, Chapelan became the publisher's right-hand man, his *homme de compagnie*, and enjoyed a close working relationship with Grasset, who appreciated the dependability and discretion of his young associate, referring to him as *le seul type fumable* at *Le Figaro*. Gradually Maurice Chapelan became indispensable to Bernard Grasset and would remain so, long after leaving his official post. He was there at Grasset's death-bed.

Although Sainte-Beuve had been one of Chapelan's chief models in the art of literary criticism, Grasset himself exercised a strong influence on the young author, who learned much from his employer. Grasset was a shrewd judge of writers and saw great potential in Chapelan, as did Maurice Noël, the first editor of *Le Figaro littéraire*, who would appoint him, aged forty-one in 1947, as *critique littéraire*.

During his long career at the newspaper Chapelan wrote hundreds of reviews on the works of writers, both renowned and obscure. One of his earliest pieces for *Le Figaro*, appearing on 7 June 1947, was an attack on a new poetic fashion, a 'school' being promoted by Jean Paulhan, the director of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, who was an influential writer and critic as well as a publisher. Chapelan asked the question: « *Voulez-vous jouer au Fafisme ?* ». This was a disparaging article, making fun of the fad of ending lines with *a, e, i, o* and *u*. On 12 August 1950, now well established as a *critique littéraire*, Chapelan was responsible for a particularly important article, « *Le centenaire de Guy de Maupassant* ».

For many years he wrote a weekly column, *Maurice Chapelan a aimé...*, covering a multitude of new publications, including such works as Marcel Jouhandeau's *Nouveau testament*, Jean Freustié's *Chroniques d'humeur*, Jean de Boschère's *Lettres de La Châtre à André Lebois*, Jacques de Bourbon Busset's *Homme et femme il les créa* as well as his *L'Amour durable*, and Jean Chalon's *Les Bonheurs défendus*. As we have seen, Chapelan was not always gentle in his criticism and wrote contemptuously on 18 November 1968 of the late poet and critic André Suarès:

Né il y a cent ans (1868), mort depuis vingt ans (1948), il semble que son obscurité n'ait jamais été aussi épaisse.

He was himself easily amused and never failed to show his appreciation of clever writing, regardless of its *genre*. On 9 June 1969 he reviewed in fitting manner the extraordinary novel, *La Disparition*, by Georges Perec, adeptly and wittily mocking the author, though at the same time showing his admiration for him by writing the main part of his review under the usual heading of *Maurice Chapelan a aimé...* without once using the vowel *e*: « *La Disparition de Georges Perec n'a pas plu à Mauri(ce) Chap(e)lan* »:

*M. G P aurait-il soif d'un futur Goncourt? Pourquoi pas? Il a, au fond du citron, un jus d'humour, qui plaira au fils d'A Jarry.
D'ici là, on craint nos doigts à stylo noircissant maints manuscrits sans a, sans i, sans o ou sans u. Puis sans b, sans c ou sans d... On aboutirait pour finir, au bouquin rigolo d'Isou, au roman pur, son papyrus intact, d'un blanc absolu. Ô gain pour nos iris!*

The whole of Chapelan's review is reproduced in Appendix II. Despite writing under such a constraint, he succeeds in creating many clever puns.

In the 1980s, although no longer employed in this capacity by *Le Figaro littéraire*, but only now as *chroniqueur de langue*, Chapelan continued to contribute articles of literary criticism until only a few months before his death, especially when the works under review were of linguistic import. We find such an article on 3 July 1989, in *Le dictionnaire des bonnets rouges*, which is a review of Henriette Walter's *Des mots sans-culottes*. It is a pity that someone on the editorial staff changed Chapelan's heading, since a full appreciation of the opening paragraph depends on the title of Walter's book, which Chapelan had quoted. Had the team read Chapelan's review carefully before typesetting, his own heading would not have been supplanted. Such editorial interference, in conjunction with the typographic policies of *Le Figaro* in