



# About the Corsican poet Petru Santu Leca, his Fiori di Machja, and an unpublished correspondence with Paul Valéry (1924-1933)

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## About the Corsican poet Petru Santu Leca, his *Fiori di Machja*, and an unpublished correspondence with Paul Valéry (1924-1933).

Christophe Luzi

Docteur ès Lettres, Habilité à Diriger des Recherches

Ingénieur de recherche au CNRS

Laboratoire "Lieux, Identités, eSpaces, Activités" (UMR 6240 LISA)

Avenue Jean Nicoli BP 52 20250 Corti

Tél : 049545011/ Mail : luzi\_c@universita.corsica

Pierre Leca, or Petru Santu Leca, Corsican poet and writer, had the project to gather his poetic designs in a bilingual collection he would have entitled *Les Parcs* in his French version, and *Fiori di Machja*<sup>1</sup> in Corsican version. Doubtless he would have made it in echo to the *Fiori di Cirnu* his uncle Santu Casanova wrote. Time was lacking. The pad of poetries and verses which he holds from 1895, written in Corsican, Italian and French languages, accompanied of one other notebook personal, would have thrown very most probably the foundations of such a publication. A publication moreover, which is lacking in the library of the Corsican literary works nowadays<sup>2</sup>. Because the work of Petru Santu Leca, as well as asserts Béatrice Elliott, "seems to have scattered with a malicious pleasure". Some of his papers, which we know their existence because they have been relayed by contemporanean press and magazines, leave no trace after the World War the First, or during successive movings.<sup>3</sup>

Of course we know the obvious and plentiful designs of Leca : we find the main clauses very fortunately in *L'Annu Corsu*, a journal for defense and illustration of the Corsican language and literature, for which he assumes General Secretary's role in 1925 and of director in 1931. We can go through also the Mediterranean magazine named *I'Aloès* appeared for the first time in May, 1914, when he puts on at the same time the double responsibility of founder

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<sup>1</sup> The transcription in Corsican language throughout the passages which are reproduced here, respect the spelling choices of the author.

<sup>2</sup> See on this matter the book quite recently appeared, *Petru Santu Leca. Fiori di Machja. Gathered texts, presented and annotated by Christophe Luzi*, Albiana, "Pueti è Cantadori", 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Béatrice Elliott, *Triptyque corse. Jean-Wallis Padovani, J.-A. Mattei Pierre Leca*, in *Les Cahiers du cynérisme*, n°5, Marseille-Nice, Les éditions de *L'Annu Corsu*, 1935, p. 35.

and editor-in-chief. But it is difficult to know what became the other fragments of writing: epistolary correspondences, poems in Corsican, Italian or French language, artistic literary, chronic sections, newspaper articles which he writes from 1912. Spread out or lost, they remain untraceable as it is the case for its collaboration with the *Revue sauvage*, such articles of *La Provence Universitaire* or such other, published in *Le Feu*. We resign, among today ill-assorted states of collection<sup>4</sup>, not to have been able to prevent also from shelling the columns which he gives in front page of the <sup>5</sup>*Phare du littoral méditerranéen*. And other texts which had made him known, and well-recognized amongst his peers as a very refined Corsican poetic and critical feather, one of the most brilliant and the most promising representatives for his time.

Petru Santu Leca studies at the high school of Bastia. He works later in Paris and makes a career in the education, in Aix-en-Provence first, then Menton, Dignes and Nice. The personal papers recorded in his pad of note give evidence from the youngest age of its taste for the writing. At the age of sixteen he drafts a piece of news, *Pierre et Paul*, where he tolds the wanderings of two shepherd boys left by chance surrounding hamlets. In 1895, the same year, about ten poems corresponding to the sobriety of a classic style, are retranscribed with a meticulous writing in its notebook. *A une hirondelle*, *Le Départ*, *Chères sœurs*, *A mes sœurs*, *Sur la fontaine de Montserrato* are part of the series of rough drafts in the young inspiration and though so harmoniously just, that they soak their reader of profound love of the Mediterranean landscape. Plunged under the lights of a pure and serene sky, the pleasant and sublime Corsican nature gives a daily festive air. Among this rustic world seeing him growing, the awakening in the poetry of the very young man seems not to be a place to tear away from the world of the modern company, its sorrows, its contrarities. The writing borns of a pleasure to communicate the most meaning character of a country, Corsica. In other words an eternity which communicate with the works of the Nature, molded in mind of the young Petru Santu Leca by sincere feelings from which a stream comes to invade us. We can only let go ourselves obligingly in the sensibility of such youth papers.

The first years of writing of Petru Santu Leca return to its rhymes the freshness, the innocence and the young beauty of his very first loves. The poem *Rien n'est plus beau...* give to read and to feel his happiness. He is then 16 years old, the age of unconsciousness where the poets, in their first pages, are born in the pleasures of the Muse and undergo her drunkenness. Other poems as *Enigme*, *Noémine*, *Rappelle-toi*, *La Corsicotte*, *Le Rêve* put in

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<sup>4</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, 1934, p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> *La Provence universitaire* is the monthly bulletin of the general association of the students of Aix-en-Provence, published from 1900 till 1913. The state of collection which appears in the library Méjanès in Aix-en-Provence is very incomplete, like the other one still available in the museum Arbaud. There are many articles devoid of signatories, or published under pen name. It's the same for the *Phare du littoral Méditerranéen*, published from 1865 to 1938 : some copies are still available for consultation in the municipal archives of Marseille and Nice.

the honor the slightest feminine talents of his dedicatee, a girl whose name is Noémie. He writes him with passion.

"Ô douce enfant, digne objet de mon rêve,  
C'est bien pour toi que j'écris en ce jour,  
C'est pour ton nom que ma lyre s'élève  
En te disant mon éternel amour".

Petru Santu Leca is then mobilized during World War I, to participate in the fights of the Somme and Verdun, as well as in the campaign of Italy. Deemed ready for duty on September 3rd, 1914, he leaves his teaching position to the high school of Nice. He also has to interrupt the publication of *L'Aloès*<sup>6</sup>, a review of Mediterranean literature, the founder and the editor-in-chief of which he is. The first number has just been printed in May, 1914.

### ***L'Annu Corsu and L'Aloès***

The poem *Tempi passati* that Petru Santu Leca publishes in the magazine *L'Annu Corsu* in 1926, notices with sadness the destitution of the post-war rural life in Corsica, gradually abandoned by its former vitalities and bruised by a past of sadness she will keep during several decades. Corsica carries in her stigmata to come from a region dying.

"Abbandunati ò avà li campi,  
Cresce indi l'aghja l'erba e cresce u macchju.  
Sapemu ch' elli sò schersi li bracci,  
A ladra di la guerra in ogni casa  
Dolu e ricordi spavintosi ha messu"<sup>7</sup>

When Antone Bonifacio and Paul Arrighi, close friends of Petru Santu Leca, assign together the project to form *L'Annu Corsu*, they decide to design it as an anthology of Corsican prose and poetry. Based in Nice by these colleagues and friends, it appears from 1923 to 1939. Both seem to be pushed by a moral and sociocultural duty, in order to succeed to the review *A Cispia*, which only one number had been published in March, 1914. "Sociocultural Successors of Versini and Xavier Paoli"<sup>8</sup>, as they say, they hold a role of complementary design:

<sup>6</sup> Imprimerie du Sud-Est, Frey and Trincheri, Nice, 1 rue Longchamp.

<sup>7</sup> It is possible to translate by : "At the moment fields are in the abandon/The grass grows in the area and the scrubland too/The arms we know this, are rare/The war, this swindler, has brought in every home / mourning and horrible memories".

<sup>8</sup> Pascal Marchetti, *Corsophonie. An idiom in the sea*, Paris, Albatros, 1989, p. 148 sq.

"Bonifacio pueteghja, canta e incanta s'ellu pò. S'incarica di l'Almanaccu, di i Santi di u Paradisu, e di e feste di a Ripubblica, di u sole e di a luna, di i pruverbj e di stalbatoghj. Arrighi receve e sceglie i scritti da stampassi. Rende contu di tutti i libri, libretti e libraccioli, ghjurnali, jurnaloni ghjurnalleli [...]"<sup>9</sup>

The poet Petru Santu Leca returns to his first inclinations of childhood, where already the Corsican – or "Cyrnean" from the name Greeks gave to this island - Muse had his preference over everything else. Let us remember, the personal notebook prefigures from 1895 a particularly marked affection for his native land. He was 16 years old when he wrote *Noémie, Rappelle-toi, le Rêve and la Corsicote*, where he gets involved in green paradises of the loved childish, and he shows the suggestive images of the Corsican scrub, its mountains in "the air of the lime tree embalmed", in "the hawthorn which grows in a wild path", his sky "in the cheerful and blue corners"<sup>10</sup>. So idyllic landscapes give evidence of the diffuse and deep impregnation of the young reader by a bucolic romanticism, where are revived virgilian accents of pastoral poetry, and lamartinian echos of *Les Méditations nocturnes*. The poem *Matin d'avril* among the most beautiful ones is published in n°16 of *L'Aloès* in March, 1924. A passage is reproduced here. Republished in *L'Annu Corsu* of 1936, he paints with an elegant freshness the bucolic scene of a Corsican village in the spring.

"De la douceur et des parfums flottent dans l'air,  
Le chant de l'alouette emplît le matin clair.  
Les arbres sont peuplés de légers frissons d'ailes.  
Et la brise déjà fait trembler l'asphodèle.

Une note d'amour chante dans chaque bruit.  
Le jardin vibre encor du baiser de la nuit.  
Le sommet du grand mont se nuance de rose.  
Le soleil va surgir dans une apothéose.

Par les sentiers voisins que bordent les halliers,  
Le bâton à la main, les bergers familiers  
Guident les lents troupeaux de brebis et de chèvres.  
Et les enfants pieds nus, une chanson aux lèvres,

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<sup>9</sup> Pascal Marchetti, *ibidem*. proposes the following translation : "Bonifacio makes up poems, sings and enchants if he can. He takes care of the Almanac, the saints of the Paradise, and of parties of the Republic, of the sun and the moon, the proverbs and the little stories. Arrighi receives and chooses manuscripts to be inserted. He reports all books, brochures and opuscles, of all newspapers, illustrious and modest titles leaf [...]"

<sup>10</sup> *Sonnet d'automne* (pad of poetries).

Corps agile, front pur et gestes déliés  
 Passent indifférents sous les vieux oliviers,  
 Regarde ce buisson aussi blanc que la neige.  
 L'aubépine au printemps ce matin fait cortège.

Qu'un coup de vent survienne et tu verras soudain  
 De la blancheur voler à travers le jardin".<sup>11</sup>

The poetry of Petru Santu Leca prefers to grandiloquence the humility of a language which seizes the beauty of simple things. Such a writing succeeds in moving people by the effect this poet maintains with an voluntary simplicity. We remain naturally sensitive to the work of the man of letters and the poet, to the refinement of the perfectly mastered technique. His contemporary Béatrice Elliott, during a conference made on November 18th, 1934 in Cannes, under the aegis of the General Union of Corsica, pays tribute in " the delicate, the soft, penetrating Pierre Leca's presence, this poet whose Corsican verses made vibrate all those of his country; This poet whose French verses move us in the lamartinian way" <sup>12</sup>.

"It is in *L'Aloès* that we find the best French verses of Pierre Leca, and in *L'Annu Corsu*, his most typical poetry of his country"<sup>13</sup>. Petru Santu Leca lets appear by a voluntary relaxation of usual images, a poetic beauty which causes emotion. His landscapes are sober but grand. The one that shows the poem *Matinata Corsa* for example, weaved by pastoral scenes, in the hollow of which the sun is waking a Corsican village until its top, children who run in alleys, familiar faces, this home – "u fuculaghju tantu caru" <sup>14</sup> - which relights the magnificent poem of Peppu Flori to welcome a friend there : everything reminds us things we know well. Everything speaks to the reader in a moving way, for people who wonders what is Corsica and gives to it the aspect of life.

Verses sound true in heart, for the reason of a writing in the simplicity, because the simplicity gives itself hardly to a poet; But a writing much less learned than emotional. And everything resounds in the style, of a principle of consciousness and sensibility where the art of poetry becomes almost tangible.

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<sup>11</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, 1936, p. 124; *L'Aloès*, n°16, in March, 1924 : " The sweetness and the flavors float in the air, The song of the lark fills the clear morning./Trees are populated with light shivers of wings./And the breeze already made tremble the asphodel./ A note of love sings in every noise./ The garden vibrates encor of the night kiss./ The summit of the big mount qualifies of pink./ The sun is going to appear in a highlight./ By the nearby paths which line bushes,/ The by hand stick, the familiar shepherds/ Guide the slow herds of ewes and goats./ And the children barefoot, the song with lips,/ Agile body, pure front and loose gestures/ Pass indifferent under the old olive trees,/ Look at this bush as well white as snow her./ The hawthorn in the spring this morning makes procession./ That a blow of wind arises and you will see sudden/ Of whiteness fly through the garden ".

<sup>12</sup> Béatrice Elliott, *op. cit.* P. 35.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.* P. 35

<sup>14</sup> Peppu Flori, *L'Ultimu viaghju*, in *Corse Matin*, 28<sup>th</sup> of august, 1951.

"Altu è lu sole e la vita ripiglia.  
 E donne vanu a l'acqua a la funtana,  
 Cu la tinella in capu o a cerra in manu  
 E l'omi, cu le bestie innanzu, vanu  
 A i campi a travaglià. E li zitelli  
 Correnu pa le strette e sott'a e ripe  
 Facendu fughje i jalli e le jalline.  
 Avà è tuttu luce u me paese.  
 Ridenu le so case e le so vigne

U venticellu di sittembre piega  
 E punte di l'alive e di li piobi.  
 A croce di la jesgia, in pienu celu,  
 Cume par binadisce e cunsulà,  
 E duie braccie rughjnose allarga.  
 A pace sia cu voscu, o paisani  
 Chi state in casa votra e chi bardate  
 A tarra ind'elli so li nostri morti !" <sup>15</sup>

*In Muntagna* dedicated to his friend Michele Susini, *Loghi fatati*<sup>16</sup>, *U me paese*, *Mezziornu in piaghja*<sup>17</sup> spin a serie of poems which say love of the Corsican nature, its campaign and rural decorations, without setting a poetry of abandonment or past irrevocably banished. The images parade by painting all the course of a Corsican pastoral life in its beautiful simplicity. About this Béatrice Elliott underlines aptly "some sweetness, the harmony, and always a fond beauty [...] this feeling lead us to forget the material time to which we belong." <sup>18</sup>

"Eramu junti à l'alba stanchi morti  
 A le capanne basse di i pastori.  
 Ghjagari pinnacciuti, arditi e forti

<sup>15</sup> *L'Aloès*, July 1922 (see also *L'Annu Corsu*, 1923, p. 102): "the sun is high in the sky and the life starts again / The women go to the fountain / Their bucket on the head or the jar in the hand/And the men preceded by animals/Go to work on the field. And children run by alleys and in side of coteau/Making roosters and chickens run away/A this hour my village is only light/Its houses and its vineyards are laughing/The slight wind of September makes bend/The end of branches in olive trees and poplars / The cross of the church quite above / As if it would bless and console / Opens its two rusty arms/Peace is with you peasants!/ Who stay at home and watch over/The fields where our deceaseds all rest".

<sup>16</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, 1927, p. 49

<sup>17</sup> *L'Aloès*, n°17, July, 1924 (see also *L'Annu Corsu*, 1925, p. 89).

<sup>18</sup> Béatrice Elliott, *op. cit.* P. 36.

Ci salutonu cun abbastaghji. Tori,  
 Vacche, ghjuvenchi, manzi tondi e grassi.  
 Muli corsi, sumeri e cavalline  
 Croschi d'acquata, ritti sottu à i frassi,  
 E tocchi da le luce matutine  
 Ci guardonu passà per mezzu pratu.  
 L'erba era fresca e molle era la terra.  
 Un n'anciava in di l'aria mancu un fiatu.  
 E tuttu, da lu pratu à l'alta serra  
 In quella matinata di dolcezza  
 Era carcu di calma e di billezza"<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the care with which *L'Annu Corsu* succeeds its regionalism aim this "Cyrnean magazine" declares purely literary, excludes all political considerations according to the authors. In an acute consciousness for the protection of the linguistic and cultural Corsican heritage, politic would delivers a distorted vision, maintained by interpretations that are harmful to the literary fact.

"Some political accents [...] due in certain imperialist organs of the peninsula, make us a duty to reject any biased interpretation of our work [...]".<sup>20</sup>

The entitled text "A nos amis d'Italie" written in *L'Annu Corsu*, 1924, summarizes with clarity the upholders of such an ideological line:

"Selfless encouragements came of Italy to our work of Mediterranean regionalism. We welcomed them with pleasure, as a demonstration of this Latin brotherhood which should be expensive in all French and Italian hearts. In contrast, some political accents - fortunately isolated and more or less veiled - owed from certain imperialist organs of the Peninsula make us a duty to reject any biased interpretation of our work, Corsican work of good French people. The evocation of the past in our local language does not begin at all our loyalty in the present duty. Being quite sentimental and literary, It is also justifiable for Corsica as for any other province of the big Homeland. Nobody, at our home, thus would dare to make us the unrefined insult question regarding the purity of our French feelings; and our friends of Italy have to understand how much more awkward and cruel would be this insult if it had to come from abroad. We profess for

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<sup>19</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, on 1924, p. 150: "we had arrived exhausted in the aube/Dans low hut of bergers/Des dogs in the plentiful coat, lively and strong / welcomed Us with barkings. Tauruses, / cows, heifers, calves, big person and fat / mules Corsican, donkeys and poulains/Trempés by the shower, up under frênes/Et affected by lights watched matinales / us ironing through champs / the grass was soft and is in hiding her molle/Pas a breath in the air/Et all of meadows in the tops collines/En this soft matinée/Etait filled with peace and with beauty "

<sup>20</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, 1927, p. 141.



Rome, august Mother of all Latin, grateful admiration. But a loyalty of one and a half century confirmed by bloody voluntary holocausts should leave no doubt on the French orthodoxy of our Corsican traditionalism"<sup>21</sup>

Béatrice Elliott, in the analysis which she delivers in the course of the number 5 of *Cahiers du Cynéisme*, asserts about the review *L'Annu Corsu* that it points out "an absolute independence, by love of the native country. Its deep understanding of what means the word "Corsican" made many for the development of "the Island", for the return in the customs and in the traditions, for the union, the mutual aid and the fusion of all its children. In the literary point of view, *L'Annu Corsu* how to group excellent collaborators"<sup>22</sup>

As regards Petru Santu Leca, the grace of a personal sensibility is imperative, with rules of prosody and is capable of making feel effects in the most tangible and intense way: colors, images, forms, sober but grand at the same time thanks to the Corsican landscapes upon which they call, rather than by the exaggerated search for a style either for an ideology. A delicate and intimist poetry, "whose quite modern harmony" as writes Jacques Fusina, opened the way to renewing forms of the traditional fund"<sup>23</sup>.

"I had the misfortune to be born on the continent ..." (Paul Valéry)

Paul Valéry in particular, maintains a correspondence with Petru Santu Leca. In 1927, *L'Annu Corsu* publishes in its French part a letter extracted from this serie. Paul Valéry sits then since November 19th, 1925 to the Académie française, to Anatole France's armchair for which he competed successfully against Léon Bérard and Victor Bérard. On July 25th, 1924, Paul Valéry answers to Petru Santu Leca. In a first letter we didn't found, Leca probably asked Valéry to draft a poem or some other writes on Corsica ? We don't know more about... Paul Arrighi evokes on this matter, "a page on Corsica"<sup>24</sup>? Did he want Valéry to publish in *L'Aloès* or maybe even in *The L'Annu Corsu*? We learn moreover in the course of this original letter, that Paul Valéry came on Corsica during year 1876. And that he would like to go back to this island so as to know it better, to fill a lack of imagination. He finally returned there a second time in the year 1929, during a cruise he made aboard the yacht "Tenax" belonging to Countess de Béhage : during their trip they visited Ajaccio, Bonifacio, Bastia, Corte and Calvi.

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<sup>21</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, 1924, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Béatrice Elliott, *op. cit.* p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Jacques Fusina, *Ecrire en Corse*, Klincksieck, 2010, p. 71.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Arrighi, *Paul Valéry and Corsica (with unpublished documents)*, in *Magazine of literary History of France*, 56<sup>th</sup> Year, n°3, July-September, 1956, pp. 392-400. See also J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Paul Valéry and Italy*, in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 62, n°1, January, 1967, p. 48-54.

"My dear colleague,

Your letter reached me, after long events the cause of which my travels of this year are. I apologize for answering you so late, but I spend my time, since a few months, to be almost everywhere and nowhere. I made even two stays in Nice this winter, which had been an opportunity to see us. I would have said you that I was not born to Bastia, where from my father was native. But I had the misfortune to be born on the continent, and I was in Corsica only for a few days, at the age of ... four years! But I have the deep desire to know this island a little better. I dream very often that I find a pension defended by our wonderful sea there, against all which, in our current, shady, worried life, decreases the pure movements of the thought. I may not yet give you for what you are willing to ask for me. The island can't be invented. But the day, maybe, will come when I shall make the discovery. Please believe, dear colleague, in my best feelings".

Paul Valéry  
40, rue de Villejust, Paris XVI" <sup>25</sup>

On november the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1925, the *Salvator Viale* society sends a telegram of congratulations to Paul Valéry. They wish he would be an honorary member of theirs, in his quality "of Corsican and inhabitant of Bastia". In the same style, he turns them the following message: "although I was not born on the Island, my father and the fathers of my father were native of it. The Island is dear to me and crowned. My hope is to go there. A day "<sup>26</sup>. On February the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1927, Paul Fontana tells in the newspaper *Le Petit Marseillais*, how on the occasion of a large-scale meeting, Corsicans of Paris receive Paul Valéry, who declares :

"Born of one Corsica, I often felt in me the blood of our race; I often felt the style of it in my thought and in my heart; style which I did not draw directly from the Island, but from which I received the emanation, the tradition, by the example of

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<sup>25</sup> Here is the French version of Paul Valéry's letter : " Mon cher confrère, votre lettre m'est parvenue, après de longues péripéties dont mes déplacements de cette année sont la cause. Je m'excuse de vous répondre si tard, mais je passe mon temps, depuis quelques mois, à être un peu partout et nulle part. J'ai fait même deux séjours à Nice cet hiver, ce qui eût été une occasion de nous voir. Je vous aurais dit que je ne suis pas né à Bastia, d'où mon père était originaire. Mais j'ai eu le malheur de naître sur le continent, et je n'ai été en Corse que pendant quelques jours, à l'âge de... quatre ans ! Mais j'ai le désir profond de la connaître un peu mieux. Je rêve bien souvent que j'y trouve une retraite bien défendue par notre merveilleuse mer, contre tout ce qui, dans notre vie actuelle, trouble, inquiète, diminue les purs mouvements de la pensée. Je ne puis pas encore vous donner ce que vous voulez bien me demander. L'île ne s'invente pas. Mais un jour, peut-être, viendra où j'en ferai la découverte. Veuillez croire, mon cher confrère, à mes sentiments véritablement les meilleurs ".

<sup>26</sup> "Quoique je ne sois pas né dans l'île, mon père et les pères de mon père en étaient originaires. L'île m'est chère et sacrée. Mon espoir est d'y aller. Un jour" (Paul Arrighi, *ibidem*).

my Corsican father and by the education which he gave to me. And I admit to you that, often, very often, I formed the dream, and that I keep hope, to remove me one day in Corsica and to live peaceful there, the peace and the beauty which are so much lacking in our agitated, hectic lives, cities"

Saint. Malo-  
25 juillet 1924

Mon cher compère,

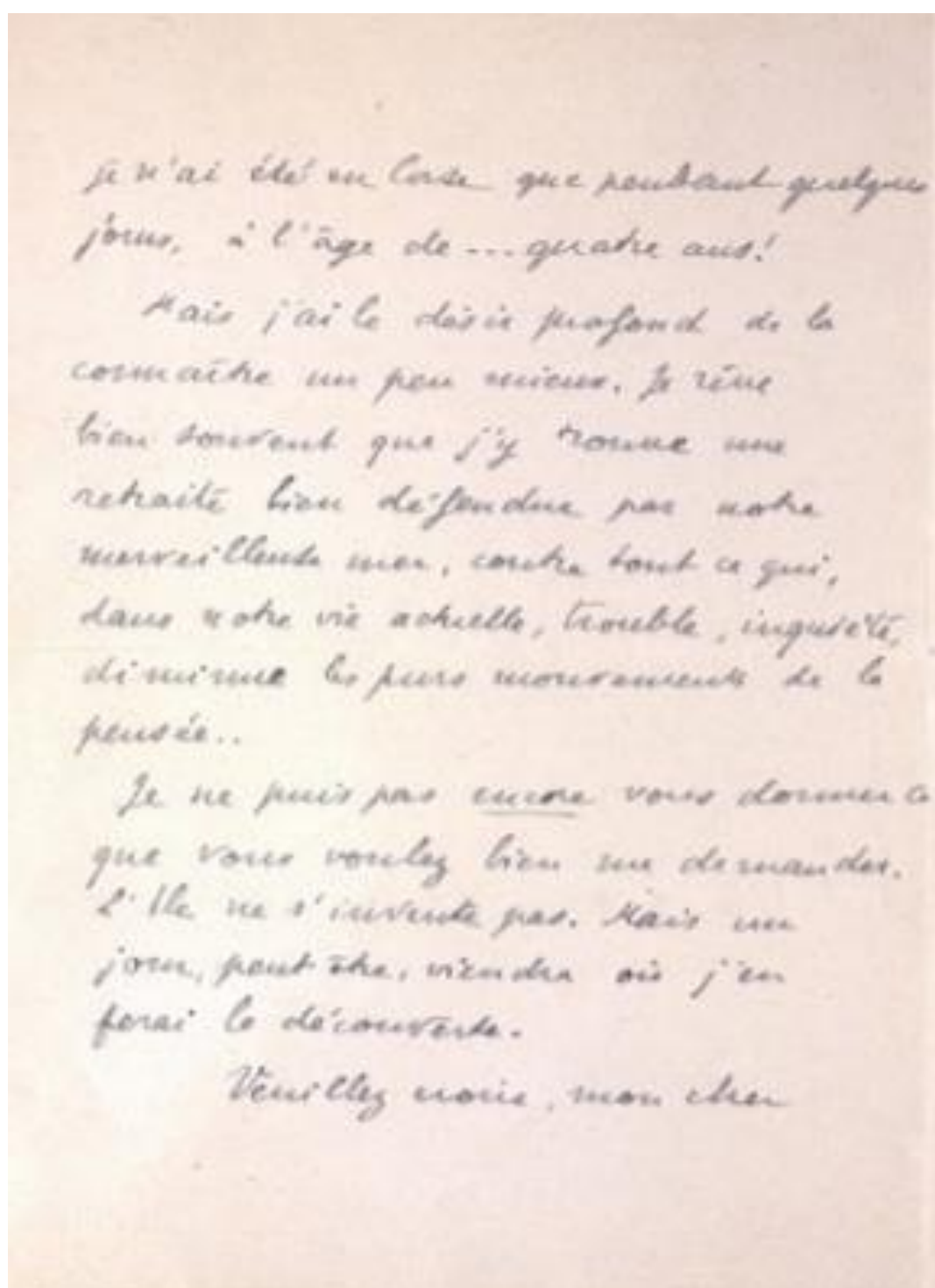
Votre lettre m'est parvenue, après de grandes péripéties dont mes déplacements incessants de cette année sont la cause. Je m'excuse de vous répondre si tard, mais je passe mon temps, depuis quelque mois, à être un peu partout et nulle part. J'ai même fait deux séjours à Nice cet hiver, ce qui eût été une occasion de nous voir.

Je vous aurais dit que je ne suis pas né à Bastia, d'où mon père était originaire. Mais j'ai eu le malheur de naître sur le continent, et

Lettre de Paul Valéry à Petru Santu Leca, du 25 juillet 1924 (Saint Malo), coll. particulière

In a letter dated from February the 16<sup>th</sup>, 1932, Paul Valéry agrees to appear among the honorary presidents of the young society *Kallisté* at the request of his president and founder Paul Arrighi, who had sent him the request four days on February the 12<sup>th</sup>. Valéry recognizes

the praiseworthy intention that Kallisté assigns, by trying "to favor the Corsican style" as a literary and artistic group.



Compte, à mes sentiments véritablement  
les meilleurs.

Paul Valéry

( 40 Rue de Villejust  
Paris XVI.)

"Dear sir,

In answer to your pleasant letter of February 12th, I have the honor to ask you to pass on to the members of the Group Kallisté all kindest regards for the happy idea

which they had to base a society the first aim of which is to favor the life of the Corsican style. I wish this style so particular and which can be so energetic, develops, thanks to the efforts of the members of Kallisté, the latent intellectual resources in the race, - because it is not everything that to take care with highlighting the earth and the natural beauties of the island.

Thus please consider that I accept to be one of the Honorary presidents of the young Company. Please find here, Sir, the insurance of my very nice and quite devoted feelings.

Paul Valéry"<sup>27</sup>

Thanks to the latent resources of Corsica, thanks to their intelligence and talents, we shall come to supply in the development of the "natural beauties of the Island". Paul Arrighi greets as for him, "a flattering neatness", just like "the public, verbal or written demonstrations, the attachment of Valéry in the country of his father"<sup>28</sup>. They join as legitimacy, and according to the statements of a witness attentive to the intellectual life of his time, a surge of opening and conquest. "So Corsica showed itself one more time, this respectable trend to claim and to annex all those who, distinguishing itself in the field of letters, arts, in the field of politics, in the field of army ... possess a little Corsican blood in their veins"<sup>29</sup>. One month later, Paul Valéry apologizes for not being able to assist in one of the first meetings of the society Kallisté, by asserting the motive for a persistent physical fatigue, just as he writes these lines. He agrees however to attend on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1932, in a Cyrnean reception in Marseille on condition that *Kallisté* gathered them in a "half-intimate" atmosphere, as is of some people within whom we obtain the result of more active and more informal, comfortable dialogues. That is why the meeting considers finally in the *Salon de la Société pour la Défense du Commerce*.

"Paris, March the 9<sup>th</sup>, 1932

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<sup>27</sup> "Monsieur, En réponse à votre aimable lettre du 12 février courant, j'ai l'honneur de vous prier de transmettre aux membres du Groupe Kallisté tous mes compliments pour l'heureuse idée qu'ils ont eue de fonder une Société dont l'objet est de favoriser la vie de l'esprit corse. Je souhaite que cet esprit si particulier et qui peut être si énergique, développe grâce aux efforts des membres de Kallisté, les ressources intellectuelles latentes dans la race, - car ce n'est pas tout que de s'occuper à mettre en évidence et en valeur la terre et les beautés naturelles de l'île. Veuillez donc considérer que j'accepte avec plaisir de figurer parmi les Présidents d'Honneur de la jeune Société, et trouver ici, Monsieur, l'assurance de mes sentiments très sympathiques et tout dévoués".

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

Sir,

I am very sensitive in the pleasant invitation your young society *Kallisté* makes for me by your intermediary. But I am afraid of the fatigue, because I leave Paris hardly at the end of a long and exhausting flu tomorrow. Furthermore, I do not know which moment I should place your Cyrnean reception in Marseille?

I only see March the 17<sup>th</sup>, after dinner; A half-intimacy, no speech, and permission to go to sleep early. It is necessary to excuse me: I am in very fragile condition.

I shall be in Avignon the 15<sup>th</sup>. Madam Isabelle Delorme, 69 Cours Lieutaud in Marseille can take care of what you would have to let me know.

Please believe, dear Sir, in my best feelings.

Paul Valéry"

Moreover, the next year, in a letter which he writes on August 26th, 1933, Paul Valéry declines quite in the same way, an invitation at a conference in the Tunisian capital. Swamped on both sides by necessities or pressing demands, he cannot honor the invitation of the Company Corsica of Tunis and his president Mr Gallini. The regrettable reason is that he bends under duress of diverse requests which weigh to him heavily, and that he stays in him from then on, not much time to grant to his own work.

"Dear Sir,

I was able to answer earlier your letter of 7 which looked for me some time and finally found here, where I am till the next end of this month.

I would like to go to Tunis, but when? I had to make answer to Mr Gallini that I could not plan my timetable, this winter, because of the quantity of things to do that I am. In particular, the organization of Nice will be probably very laborious, and will require certainly my presence in dates impossible to determine from now on. I have, on the other hand, a show in the opera which will come in repetitions at the beginning of the year. And the rest! I had to refuse any conferences except Paris, where moreover I accepted only one.

You see him, I am overwhelmed. My personal work is stopped, and I bend over the burden of the outside jobs. If you have the opportunity of it, I ask you to renew the expression of my regrets (and of my hope for later) to the *Société Corse de Tunis* and to Mr Gallini, his president. I was very affected by their desire and by the words you pronounced on my subject and which obviously created this desire to Corsica of Tunis.

Please find here, dear sir, the insurance of my best memories and my most nice devoted feelings.

Paul Valéry"

The speech of Paul Arrighi in the *Salons de la Société pour la Défense du Commerce* is published in the pages of *L'Annu Corsu*, 1933<sup>30</sup>. In small group, but warmly surrounded, Paul Valéry is among "intellectuals' admiration and pride of Corsica". By becoming enraged according to sincere convictions and enthusiasts, Arrighi flatters his illustrious host in divinatory words : the Corsican style, he tells us, wins to rise symbolically as would make a walker towards the tops of Corsican mountains Cintu and Rotondu. Because the style has to "rise towards the light", the typically light and intelligence of Corsican people. It is necessary to leave to Paul Valéry, the privilege of the last subject, held in the *Courrier de la Corse* of October 26th, 1935: "Corsica is the quintessence of Mediterranean... It is the place where meet together the sharpness and the transparency of the light of the Attica, and the species of cruelty and violence which has the light of Italy, Spain and Africa. Corsica summarizes them and harmonizes them. Here is his role and its mission in the Mediterranean Sea" <sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> *L'Annu Corsu*, 1933, p. 71

<sup>31</sup> "La Corse, c'est de la Surméditerranée... C'est le lieu géométrique où se rencontrent la finesse et la transparence de la lumière de l'Attique et l'espèce de cruauté et de violence qu'a celle de l'Italie, de l'Espagne et de l'Afrique. La Corse les résume à elle seule, et les harmonise. Voilà son rôle et sa mission dans la Méditerranée". Quoted by Paul Arrighi, *ibidem*. "By listening to Paul Valéry" by Roger Lannes, *Mail of Corsica*, Paris, October 26th, 1935.