

Benjamin Fondane: *Philoctetes* And The Scream Of Exile*

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In his preface to *Philoctetes*, Fondane wrote that “after an, better it should appear now than in the form of a posthumous work, with an introduction and critical notes. At least, dear reader, this edition has neither introduction nor critical notes – that’s something anyhow.” However, *Philoctetes*, a dramatic poem advertised as forthcoming in 1937¹, I did not appear during Fondane’s lifetime, and to honor his memory, we publish it now, albeit with an introduction and critical notes.

And yet
a time will come when I shall be
only a fable, an absurd kind of mythical
secret, an existence which existed, where then?
in what century?

(*Le Mal des fantômes*, p. 315)²

I. *Between unjust laws*

Justice! (...) I have seen it nowhere / it has no face.

(*Philoctetes*, pp. 12-13)

I cry aloud, but there is no justice.

(*The Book of Job* 19:7)

Benjamin Fondane’s life and death were bounded by unjust laws. He was born on 14 November 1898 in the Moldavian city of Jassy, in a Romania which considered its large minority of Jewish inhabitants as foreigners, periodically passing discriminating laws against them, and formally agreeing to recognize them as Romanian nationals only in December 1919.³

Fondane was the second child and only son of Isaac and Adela (née Schwartzfeld) Wechsler and was named Benjamin after his maternal grandfather, an eminent member of the Jewish community, who had died in 1897, whose library he inherited. He was later to romanize his name to Fundoianu, after Pundoia, the name of a tract of land previously held in tenure by his paternal grandfather, and then to change his name to Fondane.

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Registered as a student at the Law School of the University of Jassy in 1914, he abandoned his studies after three years as a result of anti-Semitic discrimination, this open anti-Semitism being one of the reasons for his emigration to France in 1923. Between 1920 and 1939, about 70,000 Jews originating from Eastern Europe came to Paris.⁴

Fondane became a French citizen in 1938, helped by the solidarity of his friends from the Marseilles-based review "Les Cahiers du Sud", who participated in the donation of the heavy naturalization fee⁵. However, between 1940 and 1944 the Vichy regime in France passed over 160 discriminatory anti-Semitic laws, decrees and circulars concerning Jews⁶. Denounced in March 1944, Fondane and his sister, the actress Line Pascal, were taken to the Paris Prefecture de Police and then interned in Drancy, from where they were deported by Convoy No. 75 on 30 May 1944 to Auschwitz, Benjamin Fondane was gassed at Auschwitz-Birkenau on 3 October 1944.

Seated on the Ladder of Babylon, I wept
and the soldiers told me: you must work, Jew!
work is freedom!

(*Le Festin de Balthazar*, 1932, p. 10)⁷

II. *From Jassy to Bucharest*

The multiple facets of Fondane: poet, philosopher of the "unhappy consciousness," critic, essayist, screenplay author, are the modulations of his cry of exile, as a Jew in Romania, a Romanian Jew in France, a French existentialist challenging the dominance of rationalism and Reason.

This cry of exile is also voiced in his plays – for he was furthermore a dramatist and a man of the theater. Throughout his life, his early translations and adaptations to his three extant poetic dramas (*Le Festin de Balthazar*, *Philoctète* and *Le puits de Maule*)⁸, poetry and philosophy were fused together to become a form of defiance and a forum for questioning.

In Romania, his youthful interest in the theater had been fourfold: translations, dramatic texts, critical articles, theatrical productions. As an adolescent in Jassy, he translated into Romanian texts from the Yiddish by Rosenfeld, one of the founders of Romanian Theater, and, from a German version of the Dutch writer Herman Heijerman's play *Ahasverus* (1912), about the effects of a pogrom upon a Russian Jewish family⁹.

One outcome of his readings on Biblical themes took the form of a short symbolist drama whose theme was the denial of Peter, *Tăgăduința lui Petru*, written in December 1917 and published in Jassy in February 1918¹⁰. We can already see here the interest in a character who denies the symbol of divinity.

Among the many periodicals to which Fondane contributed articles was "Rampa", a journal devoted to the theater¹¹. He was its theater critic from 1916 to 1923, writing

under the pseudonym Constantin Meletie. "In the world of ideas, I love lepers. I have fled. I can recognize a thinker from a single idea. A poet from a single metaphor (...). For me life lived is no anecdote. It is an inner sea." ("Rampa", III, 424, 23 February 1919)

The idea of the leper, another figure of exile, of someone set apart, was often to recur in his work. We recall one of his Romanian poems "*Psalmul leprului*" – *the Psalm of the leper*¹², where the leper laments to God about his condition, and we are also reminded of the evocation of impurity in *L'Exode*:

Darkness has drowned my face,
my head is uncovered, and I cry:
Impure! Impure!

(*Le Mal des fantômes*, p. 212)

He identifies the exiled Philoctetes too with the leper, uniting Biblical and Greek impurity:

(...) the wretch, the leper
the pariah of Greece
the nauseous wound.

III. *Insula*

Influenced by Jacques Copeau and the development of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, founded in Paris in 1913, Fondane created in 1922 a theater group "Insula" (Island) at the former Maison d'art, strada Corăbiei in Bucharest, with the help of his sister Lina, brother-in-law Armand Pascal, his cousin Bety, Ion Pillat, N. D. Cocea, Ion Morțun, Petre Sturza, Ion Vinea and Claude-Emile Rosen¹³.

According to a program of period, the group had as its motto Copeau's remark "For new work leave us bare boards" ("Pour l'oeuvre nouvelle qu'on nous laisse un tréteau nu" from his *Essai de rénovation dramatique* NRF, 1 September 1913), and its repertoire was based on that of Copeau's: Molière, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*; La Fontaine and Champsmelé, *La Coupe enchantée*; A. de Musset, *Un Caprice*; Roger Martin du Gard, *Le Testament du Père Leleu*. The choice of Lope de Rueda's *Les Olives*, Lord Dunsany's *Devant les portes d'or* and Chekhov's *The Sea Gull* seems to indicate that Fondane was also aware of the Paris repertoire in 1922 of Charles Dullin at the Sane Padeloup and of Georges Pitoeff at the *Comédie des Champs Elysées*¹⁴. The repertoire of "Insula" included, too, *Le médecin malgré lui* of Molière, in a translation by Fondane (and whose staging was reminiscent of the commedia dell'arte), Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse*; Shaw's *Man of Destiny* and a play by D. Anghel and St. O. Iosif, *Legenda Funigeilor* (*The Gossamer Legend*).

As was the case with Copeau, Fondane placed great stress on the primacy of the text, apparently to such an extent that he felt obliged to reply to critics who felt that he

was denigrating the actor's role. Is there a reminiscence of this debate and its relationship with the audience in *Philoctetes*, after "a terrible storm breaks / Just like in *King Lear*"?

Would that only be a theatrical storm by which
the audience is asked to understand
that the hero is shaken? (...)
Have I had enough of my loneliness and am I trying
to divide the sole existing character
into a crowd of beings that I fabricate at will,
in order to be *less alone*?...
(14-15)

In the "Insula" program, Fondane enumerated principles to be adhered to by the actors in the company, which were not unlike those stated by the founder of the Vieux-Colombier.

Play readings and lectures were also given (on Gide and Calderón among others), but because of continuing anti-Semitism and the avant-garde nature of the program, "Insula" was discontinued the following year, when Fondane, together many of those involved in the "Insula" project, joined the "Contimporanul" group, named after the journal founded in 1922 by the instigator of "constructive" Dadaism in Romania, Marcel Janco.

Fondane was contributing drama reviews and essays on theater to "Contimporanul" when, in 1923, Lev Shestov's *Les révélations de la mort (In Job's Balances)* was published¹⁵. Fondane's critical essays in *Adevărul literar și artistic* in August-September 1923 were the beginning of a life-long concern the thought of Shestov, one which determined his own philosophical orientation. In the autumn of 1923, Fondane left for Paris. Four years' poetic silence followed.

I began to scream without words.
(Preface to *Privești* 1930)

IV. From Bucharest to Paris / Babylon: Le Festin de Balthazar

Calderón and Gide, the subjects of lectures at "Insula", provided source material for two of Fondane's plays: *Le Festin de Balthazar (Belshazzar's feast)* and *Philoctète (Philoctetes)*.

It was in Romania that Fondane had begun to write *Le Festin de Balthazar* and perhaps *Philoctète*. Already in August 1920 he had published *Monologul lui Balthazar* in the review "Mintuirea" (II, 15-16), and the play exists in Romanian (Jassy, 1922) and in French (Paris, April 1932). This dramatic poem is rooted in the Book of Daniel and the

auto-sacramental of Calderón de la Barca. As with the characters in *Philoctetes*, the text of *Le Festin de Balthazar* is a representation of metaphysical spokespersons. They bear the masks of Belshazzar: Reason, Madness, Spirit and Death. Jewish immigration and racism are dealt with in an ironic tone of voice:

The Jew: (...) misery undresses us everywhere (...)
 Belshazzar: You seem to have an unusual accent
 Your misery itself seems unusual
 Your lament is not from here
 (...)
 You spread this false idea of Justice!
 (*Le Festin de Balthazar*, pp. 11-12)

But the play deals especially with Belshazzar's totalitarian temptation: "mine the thirst that nothing can quench except totality," (31) and with his fear at "being able only to be God or nothing." (52) "There is no longer any miracle" he cries (71). Belshazzar's challenge remains unanswered.

V. *From Ithaca to Lemnos: Philoctetes*

The representation of metaphysical spokespersons is equally to be found in *Philoctetes*, whose source material is in Sophocles' tragedy and André Gide's *Philoctetes or Treatise of three morals* (1899)¹⁶. Fondane may now be added to Edmund Wilson's list of adapters mentioned in *The Wound and Bow*: "a very meager record: a chapter of Fenelon's *Télémaque*; a discussion in Lessing's *Loocoon*, a sonnet of Wordsworth's, a little play by André Gide, an adaptation by John Jay Chapman."¹⁷ Wilson seems to have forgotten Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubrun's version of 1755, which was Lessing's attack, and that of Jean-François de la Harpe in 1781.

Philoctetes however, was not among the "heroes" cosen by Camus or Sartre, Anouilh or Giraudoux, for their adaptations from Greek classical tragedy. Among more recent interest shown in *Philoctetes* as source material, we may recall the work of the German playwright Heiner Müller (1965) and the Greek poet Yannis Ritsos (1965)¹⁸.

In Fondane's *Philoctetes*, for the only time in his work, it is not Ulysses who represents the figure of the Wandering Jew¹⁹, but *Philoctetes*, who is the mirror of the poet in exile and in solitude. According to the preface, written ten and then fifteen years after the play's completion, Fondane began the play "soon after the Dada period" (therefore around 1922-1923) and he wanted to "correct both the Greek tragedy which spoke only of a forced loneliness" and Gide's "treatise" where ethics was but "dependence on esthetics." He writes that he has "tried to bring *Philoctetes* back to the metaphysical level," with Ulysses, representing Order and the Reason of State, as a caricature of Maurras, and

Neoptolemus, as a Kantian eventually coming closer to Nietzsche, his questioning then obedience transformed to pity and refusal.”²⁰ Philoctetes is a Job in revolt whose “uninterrupted cries of suffering demand a response” – the cry of Shestov, too, the appeal against Necessity, against Reason, the cry of Jerusalem against Athens in a “de-hellenised” play:

Ah! Ah! ... this scream crushes
between its forefinger and thumb
the world’s noblest thought (...)
you mustn’t serve up
thought to those who suffer
and who demand to be cured.

VI. *Poetry and the scream*

“Scream! We shall consider that to be a *demonstration*,” wrote Fondane in his *Faux traité d’esthétique* (1938)²¹. “What then is poetry for us – a scream, a prayer, a magical act?”

The “classical” poetry of Philoctetes; this “semblance of classical verse” ends with Philoctetes’ entrance and if the poetry of “free verse comes into play only through the state of trance, conflict and tension,” it is a tension between instrumental forces, with Ulysses as the emitting instrument of State power, Neoptolemus the transmitting tool of persuasive language, and Philoctetes as humanity, receiver of suffering.

We may see in Philoctetes’ bow, which provides his sustenance, the lyre of poetry, the Greek holiness of Beauty, and the esthetics of the beautiful. These Fondane found wanting and he renounced them, together with their esthetic justification of the world. This denial of esthetics does not however remove the care Fondane took in the description of staging and scenography, the utilization of masks, marionettes and dwarves, the attention paid to music and dance. This was not the “conscious hallucination” or “double frenzy” which he decried on the part of the surrealists (see *FTE*, Ch. IV, pp. 63-76), but rather the object as a “good conductor of the real.” (*FTE*, p. 78).

For Fondane, poetry has the responsibility of “restituting everything that the operations of the intellect have despised, condemned and mutilated, in other words finite and humiliated existence and its intimate thought: myth.” (*FTE*, p. 85) *Philoctetes* is such a dramatic poetic restitution, with Ulysses (using Neoptolemus as the mediator of intellectual operations) the figure of the despiser, condemner, and, indirectly, mutilator, and Philoctetes as the mythologized thought of finite and humiliated existence.

In his recent discussion of Fondane and Claude Vigée, Michel Elial speaks of “the deep wound of the real which operates in the unhappy – historic – consciousness of the poet.”²² The voicing of this deep wound is the cry or scream of Philoctetes, and we may note here the affinity with Artaud’s dramaturgy²³. The dramatic cry is that principally of

theatrical representation for the listening audience. However for Fondane, “this drama is not destined for the theater; it will not go to the crowds; it can therefore *dare*.” The cry, then, is more than *exclamatory* – it is *interrogative*. The scream poses a question.

“Just think,” Fondane writes in the preface, “that Sophocles hero cries out uninterruptedly throughout one act: these cries of suffering demand a response and a solution.” The visceral scream of Philoctetes is in opposition to the rational scheme of Ulysses²⁴. *Philoctetes* is moreover a tragedy of *physical pain*, with the tragic text as *metaphysical* questioning. It is a drama of a festering wound, a nauseous smell. David B. Morris writes of Sophocles’ Philoctetes, that “he in some sense *is* his wound. HIS character has become inseparable from his pain.”²⁵

We know that for Fondane, Philoctetes’ cries are also those of religious revolt, “close to Job’s position.” Kierkegaard, too, compared Philoctetes to Job. Despite the Biblical and Greek different cultural contexts, they are brought together by the modes of pathos and lamentation. Here is Job as the figure of the suffering Jew in exile, to whose question there is either no answer, or merely the answer of destruction²⁶.

I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost
not answer me (...)
And Thou dissolvest my substance.
(*The Book of Job*, 30:20-22)

“We can only be interested in man and in what destroys him,” wrote Fondane in 1928²⁷.

The cry of Philoctetes/Job in his dialogue with God, against laws of the city, of Reason, of cold and calculating logic, is transmitted through a text which itself is hesitant, trembles and quakes, “the feeling / of drawing out only from himself / the porous matter of world / and that freedom which begets itself!”

To confront the proofs of Reason, the poet brings his proofs, first truths. What are they? “Quite simply, life, death, suffering, misery, love, anger, boredom, cowardice, sacrifice, solitude, unknown, mystery, fatality, chance, freedom exist.” (*FTE*, p. 54)

“And yet” continues Fondane (*FTE*, p. 74), “behind the words, despite the words, the tragedy that happens is true.” Shestov said to Fondane in 1937: “the philosopher must seek out the Sources, beyond Necessity, beyond Good and Evil,” and, the following year: “However, *despite the evidence*, man cries unto God; he asks help, he believes that *God can* – I have not been able to get over this difficulty: I could only struggle.”²⁸

Let us conclude our introduction with premonitory cry of the exiled Philoctetes/Fondane in his struggle, a cry of darkness and of light:

I have suffered and have not come across your face
I have known injustice – and have not found you
words cover you like a tired eyelid

and you vanish into actions –
 who then are you? answer!
 (...)

 who is he who will judge
 who is he who in the flame
 will show us how to burn alive
 will teach us through death
 the darkened meaning of life
 Who?
 (...)

 I shall speak to you simply
 without bitterness or resentment,
 without poetry,
 but may my voice leave
 in you, as in a glass of water,
 long branches of light.
 (40-41)

NOTES

¹ *Philoctète (poème dramatique)* was announced as forthcoming in Benjarnin Fondane, *Titanic* (Brussels: „Les Cahiers du Journal des poètes” published on 5 June 1937).

² Benjarnin Fondane, *Le Mal des fantômes* (Paris: Éditions Plasma, 1980). All translations are my own, unless indicated otherwise. Hereinafter referred to as *MF*

³ For information on the legal status of Jews in Romania during that period, *see*

A. Ruppin, *Die Juden in Rumänien*, “Zeitschrift für Demographic und Statistik der Juden” III, 1907, p. 86.

Max J. Kohler & Simon Wolf. *Jewish Disabilities in the Balkan States* (New York: American Jewish Committee (“Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society” No. 24), 1916).

Joshua Starr, *Jewish Citizenship in Rumania (1878-1940)*, “Jewish Social Studies” III, 1 (January 1941), pp. 57-80.

N. M. Celber, *The problem of the Rumanian Jews at the Bucharest Peace Conference, 1918*, “Jewish Social Studies” XII, 3 (July 1950), pp. 223-246.

Z. Szaikowski, *Jewish Emigration Policy in the period of the Rumanian ‘Exodus’ 1899-1903*, “Jewish Social Studies” XIII, 1 (Jan. 1951), pp. 47-70.

Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie (1866-1919): De l’exclusion à l’émancipation* (Aix-Marseille: Université Aix-Marseille I, 1979).

⁴ *See* P. Hyman, *De Dreyfus à Vichy, l’évolution de la communauté juive en France 1906-1939* (Paris: Fayard, 1985).

⁵ *See* Alain Paire, *Chronique des „Cahiers du Sud” 1914-1966* (Paris: IMEC, 1993), p. 223.

⁶ For information on the legal status of Jews during this period, *see*:

Serge Klarsfeld, éd., *Les Juifs sous l'occupation. Recueil des textes officiels français et allemands*. (Paris: FFDJF, 1982).

Dominique Remy, *Les Lois de Vichy* (Paris: Éditions Romillat, 1992).

⁷ Benjamin Fondane, *Le Festin de Balthazar. Auto-sacramental*. Texte établi par Eric Freedman (St. Nazaire: Arcane 17, 1985). Hereinafter referred to as *FB*. All translations are my own. This play was first performed in Paris in 1987, under the direction of André Cazalas, and in Bucharest (Nottara Theater) and Craiova in 1991.

⁸ This is the first publication of the entire text of *Philoctetes*. Brief extracts in French have been previously published in the following reviews: "Approches" (University of Haifa, Israel), No. 3, 1985; "Le Beffroi" (Quebec, Canada), No. 4, 1987; "Le Mâche-Laurier" (Sens, France), No. 2, 1994.

There are three extant manuscripts of *Philoctète*, in the form of typescripts with manuscript additions and corrections, mentioning neither place nor date of composition. It is the third manuscript, considered as the definitive text, which forms the text for the present edition and translation.

Le puits de Maule, based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The House of the Seven Gables*, remains unpublished.

The manuscripts of these works are in the Fondane holdings of the *Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet* in Paris.

⁹ *Ahasverus* by the Dutch playwright Herman Heijermans (1864-1924) was first performed in Paris at the *Théâtre Libre* on 12 June 1893 and thereafter was a great success. It was first published in 1912 ("Ahasverus door W.v.D." "Toneelbibliotheek", II^e, Serie No 9, Amsterdam, 1912). It has been republished in Herman Heijermans, *Toneelwerken I* (Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot, 1965), pp. 83-109. It was translated into German in 1904: *Ahasver* (Schauspiel in einem Aufzug, Übersetzung aus dem Holländischen von Paul Rache, Universalbibliothek No 4615. Leipzig: Reclam, 1904). The play was also translated into English, Yiddish and Hebrew. See Seymour L. Flaxman, *Herman Heijermans and his dramas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954). The title page of Fondane's manuscript translation, seen in the archives of Paul Daniel in Bucharest in 1968, but since lost, reads "Ahasver / Dramă într'un act / de / Herman Heijermans / traducere din limba olandeză, dinpre limba germanică / de B. Fundoianu."

¹⁰ *Tăgăduința lui Petru. Literatură biblică cu o lămurire despre simbolism. Desenuri și vignete de Ross* (Iași: Editura Chemarea, 1918), 31 p.

¹¹ „Rampa”. A daily Bucharest journal, 1 Jan. 1915 - 20 Jun. 1938. Editors: N. D. Cocea, Scarlat Freda.

First published in the Jewish review "Lumea evree" (May 1920) and included in *Poezii* (Ed. Minerva, București, 1978), p. 106.

¹² First published in the Jewish review "Lumea evree" (May 1920) and included in *Poezii* (Ed. Minerva, București, 1978), p. 106.

¹³ Fondane's cousin Bety Goldstein became Romania's first Jewish lawyer, before emigrating to the USA.

Ion Moțun and Petre Sturza were both trained actors.

Ion Vinea (1895-1964) established his reputation as a poet and critic in the 1920's, and directed the review "Contemporanul" 1922. His work was not published in volume form until 1964.

Claude-Emile Rosen, who began his acting career with "Insula", has written of this period in the review "Non-Lieu", n^{os} 2-3, 1978.

As late as 1983, *Insula* was still being criticized by Romanian critics for its "vanguard violence" and "negativism"! See Simon Alterescu, ed., *An abridged history of Romanian theatre* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1983), pp. 126-127.

¹⁴ See: France Fauny-Anders. *Jacques Copeau et le Cartel des Quatre*. Paris, Éditions Nizet, 1959.

¹⁵ Leon Chestov, *Les révélations de la mort* (Paris: Plon, 1923). In English: *In Job's Balances*, G Coventry & C. A. Macartney, trans. (London: Dent, 1932).

¹⁶ Concerning metaphysical spokespersons, the Romanian dramatist Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), in analyzing avant-garde Romanian theatre, spoke in 1926 of "a new type of drama" whose action culminated in conflicts of "idées-forces". He observed that "it seems the characters no longer exist as individuals, but as the exponents of some impersonal force involved in conflicts that crush or save them." (Cited by Ruth S. Lamb, *The World of Romanian Theater* (Claremont, California: Ocelot Press, 1976), p. 34).

Sophocles' tragedy dates from 409 B.C.E. See *Sophocles II: Philoctetes*. Translated with introduction by David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 189-254; *Philoctetes*, T. B. Webster, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). Recent French translations and adaptations include those of Y. Kokkos & P. Leyris in *Poe&sie*, 1981, pp. 3-38, and of Daniel Donner (Belgium: Ciaco, 1985). Recent performances of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* include those directed by Martyn Richards (Offstage Downstairs, London, 1986) and by Christian Schiaretta (Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris, 1992).

André Gide's *Philoctète ou le traité des trois morales* was first published in La Revue blanche on 1 December 1898, and subsequently by Mercure de France (1899), edited by M. Rivière (Éditions Gallimard, 1912), La Bonne Compagnie (1922), and included by Gallimard in 1933 in Vol. 3 of his *Œuvres complètes*, edited by L. Martin-Chauffier, pp. 13-63. Gide's *Philoctète* has been translated into English by J. Mathews (New York: Knopf, 1951).

For a recent study on Gide's theater, see Jean Claude, *André Gide et le théâtre*, 2 vols, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1992).

Gide, as Fondane, said he had not intended his play for the stage, although there was a reading at the Comédie des Champs Élysées in 1937.

For a compendium on (almost) everything you've ever wanted to know about the Philoctetes myth, see Oscar Mandel, *Philoctetes and the fall of Troy: plays, documents, iconography, interpretations*, including versions by Sophocles, Gide, Mandel and Heiner Müller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

¹⁷ Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 223-242. He is referring to Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse* (1699), Livre Quinzième, Ch. 12; Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766) in *Gesammelte Werke* (Leipzig, 1864), Vol. 2, 2ff.; William Wordsworth, *Sonnet XII* (1827) in his *Poetic Works*; John Jay Chapman, *Two Greek Plays: the Philoctetes of Sophocles and the Medea of Euripides*, done into English (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928).

¹⁸ Heiner Müller in *Sinn und Form* 7, 5, 1965, translated into English by O. Mandel & M. Kelsen Feder in O. Mandel, *op. cit.*; pp. 215-250.

Yannis Ritsos, *Philoktitis* (Athens: Ed. Kedros, 1965), French translation by Gérard Pierrat (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1982).

¹⁹ See M. Jutrin in this issue and in her study *B. Fondane ou le périple d'Ulysse* (Paris, Éditions Nizet, 1989). Also see: W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), pp. 214-222, which analyses James Joyce's Bloom-Ulysses.

²⁰ This is echoed in a way by Beniamino Stumbo, "Il Filottete di Sofocle," *Dioniso* 19 (1956), pp. 89-110, who saw "two principles struggling for supremacy: one legal and political, embodied in Ulysses, the other ethical, in Neoptolemus." Cited by O. Mandel, *op. cit.*, p. 104. For Mandel, Neoptolemus is Kantian in that he refuses to treat Philoctetes as an object (*op. cit.*, p. 120).

- ²¹ Benjamin Fondane, *Faux traite d'esthétique Essai sur la crise de réalité* (1938), Catherine Tieck, ed. (Paris: Éditions Plasma, 1980), pp. 103-120. Hereinafter referred to as *FTE*. All translations are my own.
- ²² Michel Elial, *Poésie critique de la poésie: Claude Vigée et Benjamin Fondane* in *Colloque de Cérisy: La Terre et le Souffle. Rencontre autour de Claude Vigée* (Paris, Éditions Albin Michel, 1992), p. 201.
- ²³ See Michel Carassou, *Fondane-Artaud, même combat*, "Europe" pp. 667-668, November-December 1984, pp. 84-86 (followed by a letter of 1928 from Fondane to Artaud, pp. 87-93).
- ²⁴ For recent studies on the scream or cry in Sophoclean tragedy, with special reference to *Philoctetes*, see Maria Villela-Petit, *L'enjeu des voix dans le Philoctète de Sophocle*, "Les Études philosophiques" 3, Juill.-Sept. 1991, pp. 313-333; D. Quéhec, *Le cri dans la représentation tragique*, "Pallas - Revue d'Études antiques" XXXVIII, 1992, pp. 131-135.
- ²⁵ See David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 248-255.
- ²⁶ See M. Villela-Petit, *supra*, note 24 at pp. 314-315. As an example of the pre-war interest shown in the U.S.A. in Job and Greek tragedy, see Horace M. Kallen, *The Book of Job as Greek Tragedy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959) (first published by Moffat, Yard & Co. in 1918).
- ²⁷ Benjamin Fondane, *2 x 2 in Trois scénarii - Cinépoèmes* (1928). Republished in Benjamin Fondane, *Écrits pour le cinéma* (Paris: Éditions Plasma, 1984), p. 18.
- ²⁸ Benjamin Fondane, *Rencontres avec Léon Chestov* (Paris: Éditions Plasma), 1982, p. 144, p. 160.

Note: In one of Fondane's last letters, dated January 1944, to Jean Ballard, director of the Marseilles-based cultural review "Les Cahiers de Sud", for which he was a regular contributor, he gently castigates him for not having read his plays: "There are two mystery plays among all my books that I've presented as having already been written: *Le Festin de Balthazar* and *Philoctète*. Have you ever asked to read them? No, your 'old prejudice' has always come into play."

I thank Monique Jutrin for having brought this unpublished letter too my attention.

Benjamin Fondane : Philoctète et le cri de l'exile

Résumé

Eric Freedman y réalise une brève incursion dans la biographie de Fondane et dans son activité consacrée au théâtre, dès les chroniques dramatiques publiées dans „Rampa” et la création en 1922, à Bucarest, du groupe „Insula” et jusqu’à ces deux pièces originales *Festinul lui Baltazar* et *Philoctète*, inspirées par Calderon et, respectivement, par Gide.

Le commentaire insiste notamment sur la deuxième pièce et la conclusion doit être retenue : « Philoctète est un Job révolté, dont les cris exigent une réponse – le cri de Chestov aussi, l’appel contre la Nécessité, contre la Raison, le cri du Jérusalem contre Athènes, dans une pièce de-hellénisée ».