

Resilience of La Rose En Vie: Recovering from Upheaval through a Trans-phenomenology of Spirit on the Basis of the Arts and Humanities'

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Abstract

During the pandemic the arts and humanities have often been underestimated, usually considered marginal to other more pressing matters, or too weak to look after themselves let alone others. This paper will revert this view by stating that the success of any civilisation, even in times of crisis, derives from the strength of the foundations of its cultural system. Resilience was found in *La Rose En Vie* (London, 2021, AP), a transcendence and synthesis of three previous studies in speculative philosophy of history of the arts: 1. "Dare-Renaissance" (London, 2009, unpubl.) illustrating a revolution in humanistic precepts; 2. 'Transcivilisations...' (London, 2014, unpubl.) a theory which proposed a new phenomenology of spirit; 3. 'Hourglass of Being...' (London, 2018, unpubl.) testing that same theory. *La Rose En Vie* offers a rethinking and expands the subject matter into the Covid-19 lockdown period, a time of adversity and loss of life but also an apt moment for retesting the strength of hypotheses in the most difficult of conditions. Some compelling results have emerged spacing from the metaphysics of the arts to the extension of the historical and cultural range, from an appraisal of the ethical to offering hope of recovery. *La Rose En Vie* is able to re-inspire if not 're-inspirit' everything else, bravely bouncing back in its robust form of great beauty, unafraid to face the eye of the storm and surviving upheavals at all costs on new basis; it is a new and net resilience from an unlikely source, dare one say, from the arts and humanities themselves.

Keywords: Resilience, Great Beauty, Arts And Humanities, Transcivilisation, Post-Postmodernism, Trans-Phenomenology, Life Giving, Diagonality, *La Rose En Vie*

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Introduction

A few generations ago Edith Piaf sang to her audiences that there is at least one phenomenon able to really enthuse oneself enough to know that there is reason to pursue *la vie en rose*. However over-optimistic her lyrics might have sound, one thing is for sure, the pink she referred to is knowable, traceable and treasurable hence resilient even in the middle of a pandemonium, with or without rose colour glasses.

The current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has effected the whole of humanity to the extent that the human condition is more precarious than it has ever been since 1989, or 2001, and probably even since 1945, but all these dates recall Western made crises, while the current one is a truly global problem. Resilience of any kind is needed from anywhere and it is sought after in such great demand by all leaders, thinkers, scholars and practitioners. In this most uncertain present, resilience from a work like *La Rose En Vie*, comes to a most appropriate time, and from such an unlikely source, namely the arts and humanities. In more normal circumstances this source would have surprised critics, and would be brushed aside for some more traditionally 'secure' sources, like governments, NGOs, institutions, scientific companies etc., but the need of any genuine recovery is so great that reproposing a meta-narrative based on the arts and humanities is no longer as abstruse, and cannot be overlooked either.

Today, as indeed for the last few generations, the mere underestimation of the arts and humanities in an increasingly capitalistic world is no rosy matter at all. So alarming it is the absence of the arts as main player in the public arena, that detecting any positive changes, let alone room for resilience, is more than an arduous adventure. This permanent crisis and subsequent ocean of pessimism have stemmed from post-modern and sceptic intellectuals for decades, and the recent pandemic can only exacerbate those voices into a very grim reality lacking the chance it needs to engage with life itself. This paper will revert this doom and gloom by pointing out that in at least one work of meta-narrative referring to many other works, there indeed resilience coming direct from the basis of the arts and humanities

Body

The recent spike and still present threat of virus variants couldn't have made things any more grim, namely hundreds if not thousands are dying every day, even as one speaks, and the vaccine is still pursuing those who do not want to be vaccinated. Various lockdowns have almost halted the arts institutions to a freezing state, and the current 'freedom day' (19th July for UK) is surrounded by grey clouds, even in the political arena, needless to say, the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson of this hosting country (UK) recently had warned he would cut funds up to 50% to arts subjects at high education level (Campaign for the arts, 2021).

The arts and humanities have had 'enemies' from within too, since the 1960s there has been countervailing movements, for example, post-structuralism and postmodernism instead of protecting their disciplines went on an over-zealous deconstruction mode, leaving those same disciplines to endless confused midpoint of cultural amnesia rather than solving the problem itself. Questioning and problematising was needed but there is a time for everything, namely one should be courageous enough to start drawing a new synthesis if not a new paradigm. One cannot continue to underestimate the killing of the arts and humanities well before the pandemic, by the same intellectuals within their own departments, generating exaggerated

front page title lines of melodrama, like: ‘the end of painting’, ‘the killing of literature’, ‘the end of history both as subject and as event’ ‘the death of the author’, ‘the death of cinema’, ‘the end of philosophy with the capital P’, ‘philosophy’s death’ etc. etc.

What room or purpose is there for new foundations in culture and aesthetic in a world that was already in crisis from within, and now still more than ever in prey of this pandemic? Could looking into any foundationalism still work given the failures of structuralists in mid-20th century Western world, and along-side them the failure of fellow phenomenologists, existentialists, ‘analyticians’, and logicians?

Recently though, some very courageous scholars have resuscitated the meta-narrative, risking their reputation from post-modern criticism. They have produced some more tentative synthetic works, and by doing so, they could be embarking into a new school, a new paradigm shift, possibly a new philosophy, e.g. even into post-postmodernism itself, not only countering the abandonment of the universals but the return of meta-narratives. This counter movement could even be construed as a return to constructivism, yet this time round it would be one through the glasses of postmodern experience and critique.

In 2010 David Christian published a journal article in *History Theory, Studies in the Philosophy of History* entitled ‘The Return of Universal History’, predicting a renaissance of mega-history, which seemed a little inflated if not over-optimistic then, but time has given him credence(Christian, 2010). A year earlier *Empathic Civilization* by Jeremy Rifkin was published, an extremely courageous and optimistic vision of what humanity can be in both economic, ethical and psychological spheres, but not many scholars of humanities have implemented his counter postmodern ideas(Rifkin, 2009). In 2012 Fergusson did the same in his *Civilization* on the political and economical analysis of things with his six ‘killer apps’, captivating the historical circle for a while but not turning the corner from the general preoccupation with the Western fall and how it should recover (Fergusson, 2012).

Although it is time to turn the page on Postmodernism it cannot be done without keeping in mind the few lessons it has taught, namely some quality guided critique and some well targeted generations of questions to the ‘millenarian’ generation. An example of applying postmodern critique is seen in popular TV series *Civilisations* by Mary Beard, David Olusoga, and Simon Schama. The series of nine episodes drew the history of whole of humanity under one roof, it kept arts at the centre of the whole discourse, this time opening up to latest issues in humanities studies. The stage was set for a subsequent meta-narratives to follow suit for all of humanity. yet more synthesis was needed. A real socio-cultural transcendence and trans-critique on previous attempt to depict Civilisation itself as a universal not without showing all the intricacies, slippages and prejudices, a real sea change from an exclusive Western artistic phenomenon a-la Kenneth Clark in 1969, or from a dominant Western historical prerogative in works by Hutchinson, Osborne, Collins, and Osborne (Osborne, 2006). The recent TV series might have saved the word civilisation itself from oblivion although putting it in the title in the plural, yet with the same zest that propelled postmoderns, a couple generations ago, to question anything meta-narrating.

The dawn of a post-postmodern, as far as a return of a meta-narrative is concerned, can best be seen in the synthetic work e.g. *Twenty One Lessons for the 21st Century*, by Yuval Noah Harari, a very thoughtful guideline for humanity to avert becoming an algorithm(Harari, 2020). Harari comes to this commendable conclusion after having masterly explored in two incredibly successful books on the past and on the future, in *Sapiens*(Harari, 2014) and *Homo*

Deus(Harari, 2016) respectively. Another work turning the tides from postmodern pessimism was *Twelve rules For Life*(Peterson, 2018) also a very synthetic work based on many years of clinical psychological practice by Jordan Peterson, succinct enough only to be supplemented by the another book with 12 more rules, *Beyond Order Twelve Rules More*(Peterson, 2021). Peterson is much more credible when it comes in ‘ordering’ the individual than with society at large, but his attempt is nonetheless bold and sincere. The same optimism is shared in Jeremy Griffith’s *Freedom*, turning the human condition 180 degrees from Lyotard’s postmodern one of the late seventies. (Griffith, 2015).

These are new attempts of returning to meta-narratives, daring to give people directions, yet for resilience sake, one would have to be even more precise and probing even deeper in the reality of these times in order to be talking about a recovery proper. As for society bouncing back, these new rules have to be adopted and practised by many more scholars, before being seen to be working, so that one could start noticing a pattern of reshaping.

Resilience is defined in this paper as in the introduction of call for paper for this very conference, namely ECAH 2021(IAFOR ECHH 2021), or as in definitions from Oxford English Dictionary, or in chapter 2 ‘Understanding Resilience’ in *Airman and Family Resilience, Lessons from the Scientific Literature*, by Sarah O. Meadows, Laura L. Miller and Sean Robson, namely in succinct manner, the capacity to recover and the ability spring back in shape, usually for the individual after experiencing stress but for the ambience of this occasion to a more social if not universal level (Meadows. Miller, and Robson, 2015).

Although resilience can be largely agreed along those lines, and in many psychological, biological and sociological circles, the same cannot be said of the definition of art itself and even the term humanities. One could give a definition of art, e.g. Roberto Diodato summarising Herbert Marcuse’s definition along these lines: ‘art is not a superstructure but rather it has revolutionary power for its aesthetic form, and art allows to comprehend exemplar fate namely art produces examples of our destiny, thus placing us towards the necessity of our life, that is, it let’s us experience the desire of liberty’(Casa della Cultura, 2019). Yet once out there this very profound definition will be disproved by any artist let alone philosopher, giving new impetus towards that disproving, or in true artistic, spirit by disproving for the sake of disproving. One could argue that every single artist has his/her singularly pinned down conception of what art is, and are willing to change it according to cognitive progress, or perception of new social changes. The Term Humanities has too counter of interpretations as there are education institutions, and as a term is to be exclusively used in the plural, in order to spare confusion with other terms. It too depends on the study by many schools and eminent individuals with a long pedigree and research tradition, and it is in the aura of reconstituting itself in the light of new research, results and great discoveries.

La Rose En Vie

Notwithstanding these terminological wars, one would describe the contents of *La Rose en vie*,(just briefly given that the whole study is going to be presented in full in a book launch in London this coming Autumn, see appendix below), as a speculative philosophy of history in the arts and the humanities. The work is of synthesis of a few analyses, compressing many other binary historiographical opposites, and in short further funnelling historiographical and critical theory of major areas in culture and civilisations, with a main focus and ambitus on the arts and their critique.

La Rose En Vie functions as a further amalgamation/simplification of the last twenty years of its authors' (Albert Pizzai's) output of four of his previous studies. It all started in Australia when as a PhD candidate it became apparent that the author's trying to adopt post-modern theory of history would have never gained the author a doctorate in a still traditional history department, which was still anchored more on positivistic and empirical archival research. His 'postmodern' papers too were too daring, e.g. the one he gave in conferences at the University of Western Australia and those in his home town, Melbourne, only frustrated him further. Something had to give, so it became clear that a sea-change was needed, the author decided to go independent and he migrated to London in the mid noughties, self-financing all of his research projects which has become almost a lifetime pursuit.

Trans-phenomenology

The author was at the receiving end on both sides of the binary opposites in historical research, and he set forth resolute in finding a path amid empiricists and relativists. In his previous studies he had established a musical culture of two medieval political factions, a study that was published as the 'Musical Culture of Guelphs of the Ghibellines' following cultural and constructive historical precepts and going as far as setting a paradigm of the whole subject matter. Yet one also understood that paradigms were vulnerable from both empiricists and postmodernists camps, so he expanded the topic of the PhD thesis to a broader cultural section of Fourteenth and early Fifteenth Century Italy, entering new periodisations and extra-cultural domains of the Renaissance and Early Modern History. Having left his University the author's consequent study was revised and retitled *Revolution in Historical Language*, an updated version of his never completed doctoral thesis, yet accommodating a more elastic methodology than the one allowed at his former University. In his new found freedom, he was able to test some of his empirical precepts and speculation material alike, in short, forming a new methodology of historiography.

Soon, another work in a similar manner and topic followed, namely "'Dare-Renaissance'" (Pizzai, 2009) illustrating a revolution in humanistic precepts, making arts along side music a new case of centre stage for the whole Renaissance period; Another study 'Transcivilisations' expanded the historical gamut to the twentieth century in "'(Pizzai, 2014) a theory which proposed a new phenomenology of spirit; A subsequent study namely 'Hourglass of Being...'(Pizzai, 2018) testing that same theory through history art by art, synchronically, even though the subject matter on arts history was becoming very extensive for one single work. So in 2019 the author devised a shorter dialogical version, namely *La Rose en vie* as a sublimation of all the above mentioned works in a trans-phenomenology of Spirit, transcending the appearance of an absolute on the basis of the arts, or in simpler terms it would be like envisaging Hegel's phenomenology but with an artistic basis, with more developmental stages and expanded dialectics, arts as the real, the real as arts as foundation, and then a transversal or diagonal review of the whole historical spectrum, extending to present and future and that same diagonality transcending the phenomenological itself.

As mentioned this Trans-phenomenology had its roots in Late Medieval and Renaissance History Music and the Arts, the author's initial area of expertise, but was expanded, tested centred around the by more contemporary times, namely around one of the great events of the author's youth, namely 1989's Berlin's wall collapse and subsequent end of the Soviet block. Yet these events have recently been surpassed by a more global one', namely the current pandemic, hence *La Rose En Vie* has been re-tested, right in the middle of the lockdown

period, updating and further demonstrating the resilience of the whole arts-based phenomenology.

In the aftermath of late 20th Century intellectual criticism and lore, *La Rose En Vie* most clear message is that it has taken postmodernism to task in the clearest case by showing its opposite. If postmodernism embraced the idea that metanarratives no longer held ground, and microhistories took centre-stage, *La Rose En Vie* brings back a metanarrative, not just contrasting postmodernism but taking it 180 degrees across. If there are no real universals in the eyes of poststructuralists and postmoderns, and in those of all skeptics, *La Rose En Vie* provides a counter cultural discourse, new to this precarious present, hence a most clear example of post-postmodern work, aware yet uninhibited by rose colour glass wearing.

Intellectual Debates

Although it is too vast to cover the whole present intellectual discussion on the subject of the arts and humanities in a 20 minutes oral presentation, a shortcut can still be taken to understand the current intellectual crux of the matter. One would suggest three recent intellectual debates, easily accessible to the public domain, held by the Lacanian/Hegelian Slavoj Zizek with philosopher Graham Harman(Finkelde, 2018), clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson(Manufacturing Intellect, 2019), and journalist/politician Daniel Hannan(Cambridge Union, 2021).

La Rose En Vie is in substance more akin in subject matter with Harman and Peterson especially in its *Telos*, see for example the central role of the arts and ethics; though in its reasoning it also adheres to the critique of Zizek. In defence of the latter, one could say that he usually reassures his opponents he is not a Marxist, but rather his main interest is to derive a new system alternative to capitalism. If the first debate the arts were centre-stage, the second debate was drawn out more in the psychological/analytic, while the third one was trying to find a current metanarrative, yet all three are on a path for mapping an absolute, but always using the arts as great supporting factors to that whole goal.

Artistic Resilience

One can speak of resilience in the arts simply because the arts offer the broadest pool of semiological material in all three debates. E.g. In the Harman vs Zizek's debate, both speaker heavily used the arts in support for the object or the subject respectively, and they agreed almost on all points. Similarly in Peterson vs Zizek's debate both speakers relied heavily on artistic narrative, having so much more in common rather than differences; e.g. Peterson working optimistically in the centre of the argument, Zizek more pessimistically on the fringe, yet agreeing on the foundation and resilience of the arts and humanities. In fact, most philosophers and cultural leaders and even scientists today are more and more embracing the share power of the arts and the humanities, and Jordan Peterson himself as an experienced clinical psychologist and analyst has reserved one of the most passionate defence stating unequivocally :“Omitting the arts and the humanities is not an option”(PhilosophyInsight, 2017). Just like in therapy, clinical resilience offers a path to recovery not unlike what *La Rose En Vie* proposes, especially when giving directives of what to expect in the near and long term future.

The resilience of *La Rose En Vie* is extracted in finding a common ground of two binary opposites rather than their differences. It is like trying to fuse diverging philosophies, like it

happened in the above mentioned debates. It is amazing how two debaters try to differ from one another, when in fact they share so much in common. Two great Philosophies of the modern age, mainly Hegel's spirit and Kant's critique, can both offer elements of new stronger metanarrative. The former proposes a dialectics which *La Rose En Vie* has been able to apply an expanded trans-historically, the latter more elusively yet in epistemological terms probably at a deeper level, that is the fourth mode of acquiring knowledge from the quadrant of Immanuel Kant's epistemological theory. Although the form rather than substance is the most noticeable feature in *La Rose En Vie*, the resilience comes in the latter one, in its content first. Philosophers have often typically put philosophy in a prominent position of explaining the absolute, often at the expense of art, but not if the arts are in the plural, and even more powerful if they are joined by the humanities, hence their power is immense and their exclusion is not an option.

Great Beauty

Unlike Immanuel Kant *La Rose En Vie* also relies on a more unified metaphysics of beauty and sublime into one great form, renamed 'Great Beauty', founded on the arts, and ultimately being supported by a great form. So it is 'Great Beauty' from art that with postmodernism became from necessary to contingent, and postmodernism further diffuses beauty so cheaply, instead, *La Rose En Vie* speaks of a contingent that has become necessary, completing and supplanting Postmodern's aversion towards the beautiful.

Not unlike Roger Scruton *La Rose En Vie* does encourage a humane return to beauty and the fruits it brings to great formation of character, but not without its dose of having to share with ugliness, because artists have a way of studying opposites in order to contribute to a new conception of art itself most suited to even resolve the issues and problems of their times, in short the humane Scrutonian hope is catalyst to a resilient new great beauty (Scruton, 2009).

Not unlike Fyodor Dostoevsky there is resilience in admitting that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. A literary quote from the great writer suggests that beauty is the battlefield where God and the devil are fighting the heart of man (*The Brothers Karamazov*).

Life

In life there is hope, and the arts are simply parallel to that, even in those that seem moving in the opposite direction, for example let's take Jean Dubuffet in his current retrospective in central London, namely *Brutal Beauty* makes amends from his earlier brutal exploits. In his earlier years he had included hundreds of butterfly's wings in his painting to both enhance the beauty of his pictures; introducing the vibrant into the work of art (Nairne Eleanor ed., 2021). Years later he realises that life is pumped into art in a much more economical and effective way, from his *l'hourloupe* sketches he slowly devised full portraits, then three dimensional forms then as human costumes, worn by actors for a full touring show called *Cou Cou Bazar*, the result is a vibrant injection of life into his work, into theatres of memory; his perseverance shows how to reinspire an otherwise uncertain Parisian period of art history onto great beauty from Brutal precepts (Nairne Eleanor ed., 2021).

In a similar vein Claudia Andujar's photography reinspires and saves the cause of the indigenous people of the Yanomami in North Eastern Brazil. She was in her childhood an European Jew who escaped the Holocaust. She did not allow that traumatic experience to inhibit her life nor her artistic journey. She started an aesthetic project with some of the most

breath-taking forest of this planet, transcending her artistic status into activist, winning the trust of the Yanomami people and embracing their culture, the 'reahu'(chants, dance, rituals and dialogues that can go on for several days) and even their cause for survival against capitalistic government administrations and greedy NGOs. She also helped overcoming the diseases brought in by Westerners as to go ahead with the vaccinations without fear :”it is this ambiguous feeling that led me, sixty years later, to transform what was initially a simple record of the Yanomami as ‘people’ -branded to live - into a work that question this method of labelling people for whatever purpose (Nogueira, 2021).

In a world of pandemic restrictions, one that does not allow us to travel as freely as before, how does one find resilience in the arts? Are we to remain isolated and attached to our domestic screens? Ultimately local Arts have the last laugh and during the pandemic further seals their resilience following the example of the synthetic Civilisations, it allows us to explore arts anew, really anew more than ever, applying the lore of humanists but no longer conforming because new venues are opening all the time. Here a few local treats, all London based, examples that can make us explore new worlds and in experiencing them repropose them anew into new teachings, works, and practises:

Lisbon Beat, Afro-Portuguese music in Lisbon Festival at London cinemas

The London Indian Short Film Festival

Walls Remember: Shorts Compilations New East Cinema (Eastern Europe), London

Paula Rego at the Tate Britain, Retrospective

Nero: the Man Behind the Myth at British Museum

Artemisia at National Gallery,

How We Live Now: Reimagining Spaces with Matrix Femist Design Co-operative

SAFAR Film Festival: Generational Encounters in Arab Cinema

Subject to Change: New Horizons; 15 artists have responded to the uncertain events of last year at the Studio, London

Toyin Ojih Odutola, *A Countervailing Theory* at the Curve,

Jean Dubuffet: *Brutal Beauty* at the Barbican Gallery

Claudia Andujar *The Yanomami Struggle* at the Curve

These events are life giving, and not unlike Nietzsche, *La Rose En Vie* embraces the notion of needing art as a saviour of life, and even more than the philosopher, there is a scope of going beyond mere hope and into the realm of putting the arts and participating humanities as foundations of reality itself,

Recovering

There is a blueprint on the road to recovery indicated by the subjective and objective forces emanated by the arts and humanities and their authors to a society and the whole world, which since Coronavirus has changed for ever. A new universal understanding has taken hold of all of those who have lived together in a global crisis, transforming the whole of society for ever.

Just like visual artists and composers engage into all boundaries finding new paths from the unexpected so leaders should prepare a long term recovery based on these forces of creativity.

Just as the whole performing arts industry is recovering in spite of lack of aid, that positive energy is sufficient to put back into place in a totally novel way a new resilient industry.

Just like you would read any work of art based on the plague anew e.g. Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Dicken's *Bleak House*, Manzoni's *Betrothed*, Camus' *The Plague* after having experienced a pandemic as life experience.

Just as one would look at a play like *Romeo and Juliet* differently today after Covid 19, this time remembering that Father Laurence could not get to Romeo because of a quarantine restriction in Mantua, and the verse 'A Plague on both your houses' will sound much more vivid than it has ever sounded before.

Just like in Thomas Ades's Opera *The Exterminating Angel* in his inexplicable opera plot, namely, the inability for people to live their premises, so today anyone could explain it so easily coming from the fear and lockdown of a pandemic.

Just as for the humanities themselves this very forum has indicated in past occasions and today more than even that there is a general co-ordination in recovering from unprecedented complications.

The pandemic in its deep tragic reality has generated new complex experiences to the humanities and critique studies in general, a new way of seeing, reconsidering, reconfiguring, and recovering more fully understanding what was previously taken for granted.

Conclusions

The resilience of *La Rose En Vie* is laying new foundations, seemingly being in harmony with yet reliable humanities' narratives and a new metanarrative, and with the further advantage of building on top of them, some of the positive examples of humanities which withstood even the current pandemic era are:

- Roger Scruton ushering the return of beauty via a humane philosophy
- Jeremy Griffith's tranformatinal zest liberating humanity from conditional guilt
- Jordan Peterson's deep analytic experience forging a positive constructionism starting from the individual
- Slavoj Žižek's apparently negativity rendering back caution in search of a new order averting the matrix of capitalism
- Mary Beard testing of gender issues unveiling the shortcomings of aesthetics
- David Olusoga dismantling colonial myths and discovering from personal experiences new ways forward
- Simon Schama artistic synthesis coming from past personal events and deep knowledge of history
- Daniel Hannan's care to find a new way from dissecting the sources of power and ideologies
- Claudia Andujar transcendental leap into trans-political activism from her artistic foundations
- Yuval N. Harari striving for a greater humane logic in order to avert future algorithm of Homo Deus

La Rose En Vie offers new heart into these discourses, hence resilience as it stands as a beacon beyond mere hope and as it is furnishing the clearest and most mapped-out road to recovery and bouncing back in shape to a world that had lost bearings from quite some time. Indeed, it is time to stop pulling the thread of deconstruction for the sake of getting an entangled yarn, but rather allow artistic entanglement weave itself out in the spinning frame

of this moment of life. This reinspiring resilient force *de vive* is as multicoloured as the arts and humanities themselves. They have time and time again offered a multi foundations to humanity itself, to the extent that the rose coloured glasses are no longer needed, no longer matters whether humanity had them on or not, given that the foundations are so greatly beautiful and substantial, quite literally, into the great multi-coloured *Rose En Vie*, yes, the living great rose of great beauty that each one has to keep resiliently alive within one's own life at all costs.

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