JACQUES CORY-AN ALTERNATIVE BIOGRAPHY

It is amazing how prolific is the [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_people) mind, and what gigantic was the French contribution to the world civilization on most of its facets – literature – novels, poetry, drama; arts – painting, sculpture, architecture; films – technology, directors, actors; sociology, philosophy, travel, science, humor, history, medicine, transportation, psychology, business, ethics, liberté – égalité – fraternité, humanism, democracy, law, welfare, photography, fashion, French cuisine and wines.. In my books I try to be cosmopolitan and fair as much as possible to all cultures and civilizations, but as my origins are in the European culture, I am Jewish and Israeli, and my two other leading cultures and mother tongues are French and Ladino – I put a special emphasis on all those – not because they are the best but because I know them most.

I have dealt in my books very much on European culture, mainly languages and literature, Jewish and Israeli topics, quite a lot on Ladino culture, and also much on French culture. In order to give a more diverse account of the facets which compose my personality, I have chosen to devise in this chapter an alternative life, not because I don't like my present life, which is excellent in all aspects and I would not change it at all (not even the mishaps that gave me a push to innovate in new aspects), but because I would like to explore virtually what could have been my life if I have lived in France, the country I love most after Israel (j'ai deux amours - mon pays et Paris – like Josephine Baker I have two loves: my country and Paris), in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century – the era I like most, the most prolific in culture, and not in the second half of the 20th century and first half of the 21st century.

As an Epicurean I show little interest in participating in the politics of the day, since doing so leads to trouble. In my life I advocated seclusion. This principle is epitomized by the phrase *lathe biōsas* (λάθε βιώσας), meaning "live in obscurity", "get through life without drawing attention to yourself", i.e., live without pursuing glory or wealth or power, but anonymously. However, in an alternative life I would opt to draw more attention on myself, not being a politician or a very important personality, but living in Paris, the center of the world, in the light, but not the spotlight. However, in this alternative life I would not seek power, and not meet the most powerful people of my times, be a leader of masses or a manager of people.

I wish therefore to have lived in the nineteenth century in France, being born on the date that Rachel was born - in February 21, 1821, a couple of months before Napoleon died on May 5 in Saint Helena, I would not have any problem in travelling all over the world, and meet whomever I chose with the full cooperation of the people I'll meet. A kind of "Back to the Past", travelling through time, without having an opportunity to change the course of events, as killing young Hitler or Stalin in order to prevent catastrophes. I would prefer to live as a grown-up, let's say 30 years old, healthy, wealthy, and I will remain at this age until I disappear, let's say on October 28, 1929, a day before the Crash, as I wouldn't want to experience the atrocities of World War II, the Holocaust, and the Great Depression. My uncle lived 104 years, so 108 years is not too much to ask for, at least for my virtual biography.

Why not choosing an alternative life starting on the [French Revolution of 1789](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution), living through the glorious days of Napoleon, and throughout most of the 19th century until close to its end? The reason is very simple – as I loathe violence I would not want to live the bloody times of the Revolution with all its [decapitations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decapitation), and all the public acclaim of [those monstruosities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_who_were_beheaded), the "glorious" and completely purposeless wars of [Napoleon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon) [with millions of casualties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars_casualties). I know that I'll have to experience in my lifetime the wars of 1870/1871, the First World War with millions of casualties in 1914/1918, the Crimean War of 1853/1856, revolutions of 1830, 1848, the Parisian commune of 1871, colonial wars, etc. But after World War I the French people thought that it is the last war, that it had returned to France Alsace and Lorraine, that the warmongers empires of Germany, Russia and Austro-Hungary have ceased to exist and were replaced by republics, and that a new era of democracy, social consciousness, flourishing economy, equality for women, has started. Anyhow, this is what they thought, and that is why I have chosen to quit this alternative life before the disillusion of the Great Depression, Nazism, Fascism, Stalinism, the Spanish Civil War, wars in Asia and in Africa, Anschluss, Munich, World War II, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Islamic fundamentalism…

I would chose to have an agnostic, and intellectual Parisian family that had a "[literary salon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salon_%28gathering%29)", and I intend to host in my salon all the who's who in literature, painting, music, science, etc. from 1821 to 1929. I chose to live with the same wife, children, and grandchildren that I have now, as there can't be better ones in the whole world. As I chose to live in the 19th century I don't have the dilemma of living or not in Israel, as this country did not exist, nor would I be specific of my religion – I want to be agnostic, so it really does not matter from which religion came my forefathers. I chose Paris as it was in this century from the twenties of the 19th century to the twenties of the 20th century – the center of the world, at least the cultural world, the time of La Belle Epoque, the roaring twenties, the who's who in painting, the most modern American authors, it seemed that Paris was a magnet to world's creative imagination.

In this alternative life I would experience an immense progress and change in all the fields – technology, science, architecture, arts, literature, transportation, democracy, with the changes from the absolute monarchy of the Bourbons, Louis-Philippe, the Second Republic, Napoleon III, the Third Republic, rise of socialism, falling down of empires, even communism in USSR. My interest would be primarily in my fields of occupation and meeting prominent people in those fields, but not meeting politicians, unless needed for my work. However, it goes without saying that I would be a Dreyfusard, anti-racist, anti-colonialist, anti-violence unless in legitimate defense, anti-terrorism, anti-slavery, anti-isolationism, democrat in favor of universal suffrage, republican against monarchy even constitutional, multi-cultural, cosmopolitan, I would vote for humane capitalism parties somewhere in the left, I would favor globalization without exploiting weaker nations, without any active involvement in politics, and if I would meet politicians, kings, and Emperors, I would only ask them – WHY?

Why has Napoleon missed the opportunity to become the best ruler ever – if he would have chosen to become a democratic leader of France, caring for the welfare of his people, without conquering most of Europe, not even one country, without becoming a despot, causing the death of millions, the subjugation of tens of millions. Don't do harm would say an Epicurean, an ethicist, a doctor, you came from a poor family, why all those airs de grandeur, emperor – you want to compete with the corrupted Bourbons? The French people made a revolution to get rid of them, and received a worse tyrant. And the same applies to Napoleon III, to the Kaisers of Germany, to the Tzars of Russia, the Emperors of Austro-Hungary, the absolute and obsolete kings in Europe and all over the world. And Queen Victoria, the "benevolent" mother, who ruled the "democratic" UK (without [universal sufrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage), the right of voting to women and many segments of the population), with a neoliberal economy, with extreme poverty, with [child labor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_labour), with very long working hours: builders worked 64 hours a week in summer and 52 in winter, while domestic servants worked 80 hour weeks, with a horrendous colonialist policy enslaving half of the world. She retained a substantial influence in spite of the so-called democratic government, but even if not - she should have resigned, ashamed of the horrible conditions of her people as opposed to the luxury of her life. Monarchs who did almost nothing for their citizens, usurping power, while their people starved to death, with an idle aristocracy, who needed them? But the same criticism goes to presidents or prime ministers in totalitarian states and in semi-democratic or democratic states, with the same social and economic problems, warmonger policies, colonialism, racism, without humanism.

In this alternative life, I would not work in business, nor be a politician, and of course I would not want to work in the colonies, but rather be an academic teaching business ethics and fighting against corruption, a scientist finding a cure for cancer and for many other diseases, and an author – inventing a new form of literature, books that will combine on the same topic – a novel, poetry, drama, biography, correspondence, articles, and non fiction, possibly in several languages, similar to the scope of my books. Victor Hugo wrote excellent poetry, drama, novels, biographies, non-fiction and correspondence, but he never wrote a book that comprises all those form of literature together, and he wrote exclusively in French. This new form of literature can have a tremendous impact on the reader, as it will chose the best form of expression for every topic of the book and the best language for every segment of the book.

In the nineteenth century intellectual people knew at least five to seven languages, if not more – French, English, German, Italian, Latin, Greek, Spanish, and their mother tongue – one of those or Russian, Dutch, Polish, Swedish, Portuguese, Romanian, Czech. Even in the twentieth century there are many intellectuals who are polyglots and who speak perfectly the languages that I speak only basically. In the twenty first century people know even less languages (at least until they adopt my recommendations on studying at least 5 languages at school), but they can translate automatically in an eBook texts in foreign languages, and introduce thousands of links to such books, complementing the forms of expressions with videos, films, songs, theater, lectures, photos, paintings, music, philosophy, as I have done in my books. All this in the tradition of the [Renaissance Men](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Renaissance-man), [Encyclopedic Knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedic_knowledge), and [Polymaths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath) of the past. I am not speaking of geniuses as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Bell, and of course Leonardo da Vinci, who were known to have an encyclopedic knowledge and excelled in all fields. I prefer to refer to one "contemporary" [Camille Saint-Saens](http://www.52composers.com/saint-saens.html#works) [(1835-1921)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camille_Saint-Sa%C3%ABns) who was such a polymath. He lived almost exactly as in my alternative life (born 14 years after 1821 and dying 8 years before 1929), and we could have been very good friends.

Most of all, I would like to meet the interesting authors and personalities: Ibsen, Strindberg, d'Annunzio, Nietzsche, Twain, Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wilde, Shaw, Jerome, Tagore, Freud, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Zola, Chekhov, Lorca, Mallarme, Wells, Gide, Gorky, France, Lawrence, Joyce, James, Kafka, Einstein, Apollinaire, Scott Fitzgerald, Pirandello, Hasek, Tolstoy, Proust, Lewis, O'Casey, Hemingway, Brecht, Woolf, Faulkner, Remarque, Blasco Ibanez, Dos Passos, Somerset Maugham, London, Maupassant, Gilbert and Sullivan, Dostoevsky, Verne, Dumas pere et fils, George Eliot, Disraeli, Lewis Carroll, Rimbaud, Flaubert, Marx, Dickens, Hugo, Gautier, Turgenev, Darwin, Baudelaire, Thackeray, Gaskell, Melville, Poe, the sisters Bronte, the brothers Goncourt, Balzac, Andersen, Gogol, Lermontov, Stendhal, Pushkin, Mickiewicz, Musset, Vigny, Goethe, Scott, Manzoni, Heine, Coopert, Shelley and Byron just before their death, Machado de Assis, Herzl after having published Altneuland, Shai Agnon after having published some of his stories, Eca de Queiros, Marti, de Pereda, Galdos, Zorilla, and many of the other authors from Europe, America, Asia..

And I would want to meet until 1929 at least as youngsters Jean-Paul Sartre, Andre Malraux, Jean Anouilh, read the first novels - Climats, Les silences du Colonel Bramble, and biographies by [Andre Maurois](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Maurois), read [*Thérèse Desqueyroux*](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%A9r%C3%A8se_Desqueyroux) by Francois Mauriac,[*Antigone*](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigone_%28Cocteau%29) by Jean Cocteau,[*Topaze*](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topaze_%28Pagnol%29) and [*Marius*](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trilogie_marseillaise#Marius) by Marcel Pagnol. I would want to meet also political and social authors who were themselves outstanding personalities: first of all the authors on the Dreyfus Affair: Georges Clemenceau who wrote Des Juges – Affaire Dreyfus, and also La mellee sociale, Jean Jaures who wrote Les Preuves – L'Affaire Dreyfus, and also Vers la republique sociale, Colonel/General Georges Picquart who wrote L'Affaire Picquart devant la cour de cassation, Charles Peguy – one of my favorite authors who wrote L'Argent (that I read) and Cahiers, and of course Emile Zola – who wrote L'Affaire Dreyfus – La verite en marche. Other historical and military authors who became important statesmen and I would like to meet are: Winston Churchill who wrote The River War and Savrola, Charles de Gaulle who wrote L'ennemi et le vrai ennemi, Theodor Roosevelt who wrote The Winning of the West, Trotsky who wrote The War and the International, Rosa Luxemburg who wrote The Accumulation of Capital, Gandhi who wrote Hind Swaraj, Lenin who wrote Materialism and Empirio-Criticism & The Development of Capitalism in Russia, and many other leaders.

Probably, those people would like to meet me also, because of my reputation, my salon, my donations, my inventions, my books, even Kafka… I would like to meet prominent film directors and actors as [David Wark Griffith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wark_Griffith), [Charles Chaplin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Spencer_Chaplin), [Mack Sennett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mack_Sennett), [Mauritz Stiller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritz_Stiller), [Ernst Lubitsch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Lubitsch), [Buster Keaton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buster_Keaton), [Douglas Fairbanks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Fairbanks), [Erich von Stroheim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erich_von_Stroheim), [Greta Garbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Garbo), [Cecil B. DeMille](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_B._DeMille), etc., theater actresses as Rachel and Sarah Bernhard and actors, famous composers and musicians, as Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms, Schumann, Grieg, Mendelssohn, Tchaikowsky, Offenbach, Verdi, Puccini, Rossini, Mahler, Gounod, Saint-Saens, Bizet, Paganini, Debussy, Ravel, Berlioz, Arthur Rubinstein, etc., famous sculptors as Rodin, architects and city planners as Le Corbusier, Gustave Eiffel, and the Baron Haussmann, painters as Delacroix, [Courbet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Courbet), [Honoré Daumier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor%C3%A9_Daumier), [Claude Monet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Monet), Manet, [Edgar Degas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_Degas), [Pierre-Auguste Renoir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre-Auguste_Renoir), [Camille Pissarro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camille_Pissarro), [Pablo Picasso](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pablo_Picasso), [Toulouse-Lautrec](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toulouse-Lautrec), [Gauguin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauguin), Seurat, Van Gogh (and buy from him 100 paintings at their 1929 selling prices…), Turner, etc.

I would like to meet as well the most prominent scientists and inventors of my "generations" – Einstein, Marie Curie, Niepce, Daguerre, Melies, Becquerel, Foucault, Pasteur, Breguet, Michelin, Bleriot, Renault… I would like to be wealthy in order not to be worried by pecuniary considerations, but not for living an extravagant life and build golden castles in the desert, just to live as I live now in the upper Middle Class. To have enough money to do what I like, write what I like without worrying if the book would be published or not, as I could publish my books on my own, finance my inventions on my own, without having to live on the meager university's grants and salaries. I would like to travel all over the world, meet Livingstone in Africa, visit India, Japan, and China, South America, all Europe and the US, Canada, Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Australia, Nigeria, Palestine.

This is of course just an outline of my alternative biography. Not even a synopsis, as I have not decided yet what will be the plot – it couldn't be historical, as we know already the history, it wouldn't include also amorous intrigues, as in our family "les gens heureux n'ont pas d'histoire" – happy people are not interesting. I wouldn't be too original if I would adopt Tolstoy's opening sentence in Anna Karenina, which was the first sentence that I learned in Russian: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way”. For people who have read it all, what can be new in describing the family problems of Hugo or Zola? So, it should be an intellectual novel, inventing new insights in cultural conversations between me and the most interesting persons described above – Ibsen would tell me who was his role model for Thomas Stockman and Churchill would tell me about his plans. As usual I will have only a few hundred readers, but I wouldn't mind as in both lives I am not writing for royalties but for posterity, so that my books would be a guideline for cultural life.