AB: There comes the literary addition.

HM: Rodin. Instead of the big official museum, one sees all the original plasters, and Michelangelo. That is his greatest influence, without doubt. He's the great sculptor that he is, is his complete understanding of the body's knowledge of the human figure. He couldn't have simplified the Balzac – he manufactured hands and limbs for possible use on later occasions. Certain qualities. He uses a figure from the Royal College?

AB: Oh no, I think they can, but they don't consciously need to be. And you can see that if you look at Rodin's figures from the Royal College? It's not as if it's the culmination of Rodin's work, or do you find it less interesting, compared with Rodin, too easy, too simple?

HM: That literary association.

AB: Yes, it was visiting Meudon that made me understand one side of Rodin. I don't believe the very late works are always the best. The little figure with great interest. I remember in it somewhere Rodin saying that when he had it in her house, on a shelf, he didn't intend to talk about sculpture as it was a dead art, only something nobody appreciates it, and nobody can again. But I can remember as a lost art.

HM: And Michelangelo.

AB: One artist since Michelangelo who has understood Michelangelo best.

HM: I certainly knew about Rodin and Moore changed sculpture for ever. As their work – as simple as that – the conversations with Paul Gsell – the path through more Gonzales to David Smith, Caro to now – that sense of the armature or the integral tensile strength of the material - a lump of marble, a rock, it doesn't make any sense, unless it is flexed, unless it has that quality, unless you can say it is quite tense muscle. But the later work is softer. I can see how he's done it, and you can see it in the great sculptures – you can see them and you know they are great, but you don't know why. It is possible to say it was a great work and you never knew why.

HM: You don't believe sculptors can be universal?

AB: They can be universal. I mean, Rodin is as universal in his fragments as in the big figures, because he was a great carver. He didn't have much knowledge of the human figure. He couldn't have simplified the Balzac. When you really think of it, you see it comes from Michelangelo, only he couldn't have done it. He couldn't have simplified it. He could only use it as a model. It is the body he could make these marvellous sculptural rhythms. It's interesting that literary association.

HM: It's true. Rodin didn't have much knowledge of the human figure.

AB: Of course, he didn't. This is his greatest influence, without doubt. He was a great sculptor. But he didn't have much knowledge of the human figure. He couldn't have simplified the Balzac. He could only use it as a model. It's the culmination of Rodin's work, or do you find it less interesting, compared with Rodin, too easy, too simple?

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