73-22,738

LYON, William B., 1938-
THE URANIAN MOTIF IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE.

The City University of New York, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, modern

Name also appears as William B. Lyon, III.

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

THE URANIAN MOTIF

IN

TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

by

WILLIAM B. LYON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1973

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5/21/73
Date

Alex Szogyi
Chairman of Examining Committee

May 21/73
Date

Henri Peyre
Exedutive Officer

Roselle C. Lamont

Henri Peyre
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

I would like to express my gratitude:

to Professor Alex Szogyi who encouraged me to break the taboo - with discretion. His sensitive and creative mentorship was invaluable;

to Professor J. Robert Loy for his concern that this "opus" be "magnum";

to Professors Rosette Lamont and Henri Peyre for their constructive criticisms;

and to Jerim Klapper for his patience, support and faith - without which a dream would never have become a reality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(Schemata to accompany "The Homosexual Structure of *A la recherche du temps perdu*" are to be found on pages 43 and 44.)

INTRODUCTION

In 1970 director Louis Malle portrayed a fourteen-year-old boy's awakening to sexuality in his film Le Souffle au coeur. The young hero Laurent passes through a series of sexual encounters before eventually sleeping with his own mother. He begins with masturbation (while caressing his cat), proceeds to heavy petting with a girl at a party, and is next taken to visit a prostitute by his playfully nefarious older brothers. In his "march toward manhood" Laurent also tries to seduce one of the girls at the spa where he is receiving treatment for his heart murmur. And after the climactic scene with his mother, he spends the night with another of the girls at the spa.

Each one of these sexual encounters is openly depicted. The brothers jest about Laurent's masturbation and the three boys compare the sizes of their sexual organs. The scene with the prostitute is especially graphic. Incest, masturbation and prostitution are overtly portrayed by Malle and recognized by the principal characters. As themes of artistic works, incest lost its taboo with Oedipus and Phaedra, masturbation with Rousseau, and prostitution has been acceptable since man put pen to paper.

Within the libertine aura of Le Souffle au coeur homosexuality must also show its face. It does--in two scenes. First Laurent is called to his priest-teacher's room to make a long overdue confession. As he questions the boy about the number of times he has "soiled himself", the priest begins, very cautiously, to run his hand over Laurent's leg. "How muscular you have become", he says as he sits next to his own bed over which hangs a reproduction of Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam". Nothing overt happens.

Later in the film Laurent shocks one of the girl's mothers by accusing her daughter of being a lesbian because she is dancing with another girl. "But of course you've read Proust", our hero snickers as he jokes that he himself is really a woman in disguise. But of course neither of the dancing girls is actually a lesbian, and Laurent sleeps with one of them so that the audience is made sure of that fact.

With both the priest and dancing girls homosexuality enters the film, but it is never as overt and explicit as any of the heterosexual encounters. With the priest, it is surreptitious; with the girls, simply a joke. Laurent is almost always seen at the spa with his Pléiade edition of Proust in hand; he also admits to his confessor that he has stolen a book. "Which one?" asks the priest. "Les Jeunes Filles by Montherlant", answers the boy.

Artistic innuendoes abound in the film: the mother has a copy of L'Histoire d'O and she mentions just having seen The Barefoot Contessa (theme of impotency). While her son attentively watches, she rises up naked from her bathtub like a Botticelli Venus. For literary cognoscenti the film is a self-satisfying delight--especially in the two homosexual scenes.

But at the same time Proust's lesbian dancers and Montherlant's covert homosexual priest-teachers have become clichés. There is nothing new here and the homosexuality of Le Souffle au coeur keeps its taboo character under the heavy veil of literary references. Incest, excessively sensual heterosexual love-making, prostitution and onanism are openly acceptable. Homosexuality--even in 1970--is still a noli me tangere. If it is touched at all, it is only as God touched Adam in Michelangelo's fresco: with the tip of one finger.

It is time for a stronger touch. Homosexuality has appeared as a major theme in the literature of the twentieth century and the homosexual character continues to reappear in novels and on the stage. If Proust and Gide raised the curtain for the first major "entrées en scène" of the literary homosexual in modern French fiction, Balzac, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and the decadents were present at the rehearsals.

It is of course not only French authors who have attempted to lift the taboo which St. Paul placed on one of the cornerstones of Greek life. In the United States Whitman's Calamus poems, throbbing with vigorous masculine affection, gave way to the lyricism of Auden and to the contemporary bitter pictures of Williams, Baldwin and Rechy. The possibility of inversion in the adolescent and boarding-school worlds was the theme of many works of the 1930's and 1940's, among them Mädchen in Uniform, Demian and Les Amitiés Particulières. It had become an international theme. In Germany Thomas Mann's von Aschenbach was attracted to a young boy, not to a young girl, as the symbol of classical artistic perfection. In England the study of ancient mores by John Addington Symonds and the notorious life of Oscar Wilde had repercussions far beyond the Channel. D. H. Lawrence, T. E. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell were each intrigued by the homosexual character; E. M. Forster's Maurice, written in 1913-14 but published only in 1971, has inversion as its central theme.

If writers in France, England, Germany and the United States openly dealt with the uranian motif, literary critics

have generally attempted to avoid it or to gloss over it. The specific stylistic, social, psychological and even philosophical questions which are raised when an author chooses to make his protagonist a homosexual have not been considered in themselves, but as "footnotes" to other themes: for example, "Proust and love", "Gide and freedom", "Genet and the rejection of society". These studies are valuable, but incomplete. Too often the treatment of the homosexual theme by critics has been marred by either psychological or moral biases.

This study will consider the use of homosexuality as a literary motif. No sociological, psychological or moral criteria are assumed. Beginning with a discussion of the nineteenth-century manifestations of inversion in the works of Balzac, Baudelaire and the decadents, the body of this dissertation concerns the works of twentieth-century French novelists and playwrights in which homosexuality is a major theme or a homosexual a major character. We shall consider primarily the works of Marcel Proust, André Gide, Julien Green and Jean Genet. The entire "oeuvres" of these four authors cannot be fully understood without knowing their individual conceptions of inversion and the role that the uranian theme plays in their works.

We shall examine specific novels and plays in depth in an effort to ascertain how these writers stylistically used this motif.

Moreover, we realize that several modern authors depict homosexual characters or situations in certain of their works: Roger Martin du Gard's Un Taciturne, Montherlant's La Ville dont le prince est un enfant, Sach's Le Sabbat and Sartre's Huis Clos and L'Age de Raison, for example. Yet it is not an all-pervasive theme as it is in the works of Proust, Gide, Green and Genet, in which inversion itself is intimately related to both their styles and to their basic conceptions of man. Some references will be made to the lives of these authors, but this is not a biographical study.

We also realize that many other works may have homosexual undertones or may be interpreted by the critic's postulating an unconscious inversion within a character: one thinks of Cocteau's Les Enfants terribles or Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes. But the authors of such works have not made any overt mention of homosexuality in them and they will therefore not be included in this study. Hippolyte, Raskolnikov and Dorian Gray might each have had unconscious inversion as his motivation, but, if so, it is

because later critics have so interpreted them.

The works will be considered thematically, not in a strict chronological order. The following list of publication dates will therefore help orient the reader in time:

1834 - Balzac: Le Père Goriot
1835 - Balzac: La Fille aux yeux d'or
Gautier: Mademoiselle de Maupin
1837-43 - Balzac: Les Illusions perdues
1839 - Balzac: Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes
1857 - Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du mal
1873 - Rimbaud: Une Saison en enfer
1897 - Rachilde: Les Hors-Nature

1902 - Gide: L'Immoraliste
1903 - Gide: Saül (written in 1896)
1913-1927 - Proust: A la recherche du temps perdu
1924 - Gide: Corydon
1926 - Gide: Si le grain ne meurt...; Les Faux-Monnayeurs
Bourdet: La Prisonnière
1931 - Green: L'Autre sommeil
1944 - Genet: Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs
1946 - Genet: Miracle de la rose
Gide: Thésée
1947 - Genet: Pompes funèbres; Querelle de Brest
1949 - Genet: Journal du voleur
1953 - Green: Sud
1960 - Green: Chaque homme dans sa nuit

VAUTRIN AND BALZAC

There are only two exclusively homosexual characters in all of La Comédie humaine: the lightly sketched marquise de San-Real of La Fille aux yeux d'or and the ubiquitous Vautrin. Most critics have been satisfied to accept Vautrin's homosexuality as Balzac's desire to include yet another human type in his portrait gallery. Treatment of homosexuality by Balzac was related to the conception of homosexuality in the works of Saint-Simon and Proust. Yet the differences are important. For Saint-Simon the depiction of inversion was linked with a moral judgment: "La peinture de l'homosexualité dans les Mémoires est caractérisée par l'expression d'un sentiment de dégoût."[1] And, as we shall see, Proust's painting of the homosexual subculture was an integral part of his fresco of human activity and motivations. Did Balzac create Vautrin as an invert simply to have his "token homosexual"? And why Vautrin rather than another?

This major character of Balzac's world is primarily considered as the incarnation of Evil, a Devil. The author so characterizes him many times throughout the novel. But if Vautrin is "LE CRIME", he is not the homosexual; Balzac does not attempt to generalize on homosexuality or to equate

Vautrin with all inverts. He remains an individual, yet through him Balzac draws a strong psychological and mythic portrait of a certain type of homosexual.

The tastes of Vautrin are never expressly stated until almost the end of his story, when the prisoners at the Conciergerie believe that their "dab" has reappeared there because his "tante"--the young Corsican Calvi--is about to be executed. Until then nothing is openly stated and it is probable that most people of the time did not even suspect this aspect of Vautrin's personality in reading Le Père Goriot and Les Illusions perdues. Yet Balzac does reveal Vautrin in the following three ways. First, by statements which other characters make about him, especially about his utter contempt for women:

> --Trompe-la-Mort ne se laisserait pas aborder par une femme, dit l'agent. Apprenez un secret: il n'aime pas les femmes.[2]

Secondly, through certain remarks which Vautrin himself utters, he does reveal himself. He constantly comments on the physical beauty of young men and repeatedly evokes the Venise sauvée of Otway and the friendship between Pierre and Jaffier described in that book:

> --Enfant, dit l'Espagnol en prenant Lucien par le bras, as-tu médité la Venise sauvée d'Otway? As-tu compris cette amitié profonde, d'homme à homme, qui lie Pierre à Jaffier, qui fait pour eux d'une femme une bagatelle, et qui change entre eux tous les termes sociaux?[3]

The aversion for women is a characteristic of the homosexual that Balzac accepts without question. From la Michonneau to Esther, Vautrin insults or abuses women; he seldom speaks kindly of them. Thus, through both his own words and those of others, signals are given to the reader about Vautrin's inversion.

Most important of his techniques is the equivocal atmosphere in which Balzac envelopes his protagonist. Indeed, this aura of mystery is also necessary to depict Vautrin the arch-criminal who must consciously live a life of deception. The very first physical characteristic we see of this man is his famous "favoris peints". But does Vautrin tint his sideburns--and wear a wig--to hide his identity as an ex-convict or to appear younger, and therefore more appealing, to another man? He has a Herculean physique, a physical hardness, yet at the same time we have the contrast of "ses manières souples et liantes". The importance given to his eyes and their ability to comprehend all situations prefigures Proust's emphasis on the same subject in the homosexual. Moreover, the mystery of Vautrin is further reinforced by his numerous identities and disguises. The motif of the mask--of the man who appears other than he really is--is one of the basic themes of all subsequent writers who have created homosexual characters. And not only are Vautrin's words and physical attributes made to

be ambiguous, but so are his actions. Who is the mysterious man whom he takes up to his room? A fellow criminal or a fellow homosexual?

For Balzac, therefore, Vautrin is portrayed as an equivocal being, perhaps the most mysterious of all the characters of La Comédie humaine. He is also an "hors-la-loi"; by being a criminal he is outside the legal norms under which most people live. At the same time, by being a homosexual, he does not exist on the same moral level as the "bon bourgeois" who reads Balzac's novel. The link is important; the theme of "the homosexual as outsider" will reappear again and again from Baudelaire to Genet. The motif is first clearly used by Balzac. Can we assume that by making his incarnation of Satan also a homosexual that Balzac thereby considered inversion a most terrible evil? Is it a moral statement that the author wished to make? This one-to-one reasoning is too simple, and falters, first, because one is ultimately not disgusted and revolted by Vautrin as a character, and second, because the love of Vautrin for Lucien does redeem him from his aura of satanism. Rather, Vautrin is an "exotic" character, one whom the reader sees as completely different from himself and with whom he does not identify. One might see aspects of his own personality

reflected in Julien Sorel or in Emma Bovary, but not in Vautrin; most people are not criminals à la Vautrin--and most are not homosexual. Thus Balzac places a kind of veil--an esthetic distance--between reader and character. The only other tale in which homosexuality is mentioned is La Fille aux yeux d'or. The theme is here bathed in the exoticism of both the two Spanish women, their servant and setting of ornate luxury. For Balzac the deviation from the heterosexual norm always takes place among foreigners, or in an unusual, bizarre setting. Just as the castrato tale of Sarrazine occurs in the operatic milieu of a decadent Italy, so the delicate bestiality of Une Passion dans le désert is not even a "scène de la vie de province". The reader is not thunderstruck by the revelation of la Zambinella's identity, nor by the fact that Paquita Valdès is a woman's mistress. He has been led into a strange and different world; one more "bizarrerie" is not "invraisemblable".

In these three tales of "perversions", we notice another characteristic which we shall later see in the relationship between Vautrin and Lucien. Whatever the specific passion may be, it is always couched and described in heterosexual terms. One almost forgets that the panther in Une Passion dans le désert is an animal, so thoroughly does Balzac

equate it with a woman. The only time that his listener interrupts the narrator's recounting of the story of Sarrasine is to ask how the little old man figures in it. "But you see nothing but him!" exclaims the narrator. Yet it is not the male character Sarrasine, but the ultra-feminine la Zambinella who will become the mysterious old man. The young castrato is not portrayed as a hermaphroditic being, but entirely as a female; it is only in this guise that she/he evokes the passion of Sarrasine. In a similar manner, Rastignac will not fall under the influence of Vautrin because he lacks the feminine side of Lucien. The panther, the castrato and Lucien are likened to women; it is only in this way that the male characters can respond to them.

Balzac's art exhibits both Romantic and Realist conventions. So, too, does his depiction of inversion. If the women of La Fille seem to emerge from the shadows of a Delacroix painting, Vautrin's masculinity is--to the outsider--above reproach. He does not bear the characteristics traditionally associated with the "doubled" hermaphroditic nature of the homosexual. He is what Genet will call the "matou"; his hairy fingers and "jet de salive" would intoxicate Divine. This "complete" maleness is Romantic in its

purity. It is rather through his words and actions that Vautrin becomes a realistic and believeable homosexual, not just a stereotype. Let us look at the scene in which he meets Lucien de Rubempré for the first time.

Lucien is here the agonizing Romantic hero, meditating on the surest and least ugly means of commiting suicide. He walks pensively along the banks of a river, carrying a large bouquet offlowers which he has just picked. This small detail, the flowers, the ageless symbol of woman and beauty, expresses the femininity of the young man. The unknown stranger (Vautrin) will be drawn immediately to Lucien's beauty:

> ...l'inconnu se retourna, parut comme saisi de la beauté profondément mélancolique du poëte, de son bouquet symbolique et de sa mise élégante.[4]

Beauty, the poet, the bouquet and the elegant attire: Lucien is the man-woman. On the contrary Vautrin is ugly, strong and brutish. But here he is disguised as Carlos Herrera, the Spanish prelate. This specific incognito of Vautrin is the one he will use throughout his entire relationship with Lucien, that is, during the "homosexual" part of La Comédie humaine. We left Jacques Collin/Vautrin as he was being led out of the Maison Vauquer; we meet him again only at this moment. He will not drop this disquise until after Lucien's death. The priest's robe resembles a woman's dress; Balzac

did not neglect the similarity. Moreover, not only is our homosexual now a priest, he is a Spanish one and thus enters further into the real of the exotic. The priest is smoking a cigar and offers one to the young man:

> ...je me passe de temps en temps un petit cigare. Dieu nous a donné le tabac pour endormir nos passions et nos douleurs...[5]

If Balzac were writing after Freud, the image might be obvious; it is none the less revealing. Lucien refuses the cigar--for he is not a homosexual.

It is a seduction scene which Balzac will now describe, in which the "feminine" Lucien will be dominated and won over by the "masculine" Vautrin/Herrera. The author drops his hint:

> --Et le prêtre retendit sa boîte en paille avec une sorte de séduction, en jetant à Lucien des regards animés de charité.[6]

Charity is not one of Satan's attributes, but the word is not simply comically ironic. It suggests the ultimately non-erotic love that Vautrin will feel for his protégé. The priest quickly becomes the psychological master of the scene. His recounting of the story of the secretary so obsessed with chewing bits of paper that he devoured an important international treaty shows Vautrin's acumen in relieving Lucien's distress through a comic anecdote. He slowly draws Lucien into his confidence; he knows the

correct moment to take the young man's arm. Lucien's capture is represented by his accepting of a cigar.

Vaunting his own experience and "savoir faire", the priest exposes his theories of power in which the element of deception is paramount:

> --Non seulement vous cachez votre jeu, mais encore vous tâchez de faire croire, quand vous êtes sûr de triompher, que vous allez tout perdre. Enfin, vous dissimulez, n'est-ce pas? ...Vous mentez pour gagner cinq louis!...[7]

This expresses Vautrin's modus vivendi; it is also a necessary cornerstone of the invert's life style. Vautrin's postulates had been preceded by another sentence in which a homosexual meaning might very well be hidden:

> ...car nous obéissons tous à quelque chose, à un vice, à une nécessité, mais observez la loi suprême! le secret.[8]

It is the same philosophy Vautrin had expounded to Rastignac. Although the latter did eventually make use of his mentor's advice, Balzac does not allow the relationship begun at Madame Vauquer's to develop. Vautrin and Lucien now pass by the Rastignac estate. Lucien succinctly expresses the difference between himself and this other Balzacian hero:

> --Moi je me suis laissé aller à la poësie; lui, plus habile, a donné dans le positif...[9]

Poetry is the opposite of what is positive; it is passive, feminine. Rastignac was too active, too masculine, to fall

under the domination of Vautrin. Lucien--beautiful, vain, poetic, weak--bears enough of the traditional feminine attributes to succumb to the forceful psychological domination of the male Vautrin. Even before knowing what the stranger expects in return for his guidance, Lucien has made up his mind to follow him.

The relationship which develops between Vautrin and Lucien is not simply one of corruption and degradation in an inverted world, as Marceau states.[10] Rather does it illustrate an important theme of homosexual literature, that of reproduction without progeny. Vautrin desires to reproduce himself; he tells Lucien that he wants to be as a father to him. Precluded--psychologically--from the usual chain of reproduction, the homosexual nonetheless desires to create something or someone which will live beyond himself. In Vautrin's forceful words, this wish of the homosexual to become a "father" becomes the desire of every man to create, to become God:

> --Je veux aimer ma créature, la façonner, la pétrir à mon usage, afin de l'aimer comme un père aime son enfant. Je roulerai dans ton tilbury, mon garçon, je me réjouirai de tes succès auprès des femmes, je dirai: --Ce beau jeune homme, c'est moi! ce marquis de Rubempré, je l'ai créé et mis au monde aristocratique; sa grandeur est mon oeuvre, il se tait ou parle à ma voix, il me consulte en tout.[11]

Does this desire to be God preclude love? To look at Vautrin as only the corrupter is not to realize the human side of this almost mythic creation. Balzac writes of his hero:

> ...cet homme vraiment diabolique, mais rattaché par l'amour à l'humanité...[12]

The love of Vautrin for Lucien is real in itself, not just an appendage of the arch-criminal's will to power. "Devotion" is the key, and if it is underlined during Vautrin's first encounter with his protégé, it returns again and again in their story through the evocation of a dog's loyalty to his master. The next time we see the two men, at the beginning of Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes, it is at a masked ball and Lucien is the shining star; Vautrin is his puppy. The Vautrin-Lucien relationship is a one-sided love affair; but the criminal is changed profoundly because of it. In the world of La Comédie humaine where money is the ultimate god, Vautrin the all-powerful loses his entire fortune in enabling Lucien to live the kind of fashionable life he desires. And Lucien's suicide changes the arch-criminal into the police chief and is the cause for the dropping of the masquerade.

> --Trompe-la-Mort avait réalisé la superstition allemande du DOUBLE...[13]

It is this interpenetration of two separate individuals into one that Balzac has evoked in the Vautrin-Lucien relationship. The transformation is seen in Lucien's final letter: this time Lucien likens himself to the faithful dog. He closes the letter with the following declaration:

> ...mon mépris pour vous était égal à mon admiration.[14]

He was not a homosexual, and the love shown to him by his mentor was never accepted and returned.

All the same, Carlos Herrera disappears and Jacques Collin returns. During Vautrin's vigil with the body of his dead "lover", Balzac compares the older man to a religious figure from a medieval tomb. Weak as a child, he kneels as if in prayer while holding Lucien's frozen hand. The once-masquerading priest seems to become real, and the sham of Vautrin's life is over. In his subsequent conversation with Grandville, he speaks as Lucien might have spoken. Balzac had likened him to many savage beasts: a lion, a wolf, a tiger. But it is the image of the faithful dog which is the last:

> --Monsieur! monsieur! on enterre en ce moment ma vie, ma beauté, ma vertu, ma conscience, toute ma force! Figurez-vous un chien à qui un chimiste soutire le sang...Me voilà, je suis ce chien...[15]

> We recall that Lucien is so bound together with Vautrin that when he kills himself, he kills his protector as well, who ceases to be and joins the police as someone else...Should we not say that Vautrin dies of Lucien, as Père Goriot died of his ungrateful children?[16]

We may also recall that Vautrin kept his illusions about Lucien longer than anyone else, longer than any of the women in Lucien's career. We cannot say that Vautrin's love "saves" him simply because he returns to the fold. But he does willingly remove the disguises he has been wearing; he is transformed into himself because of a homosexual attachment.

Thus does Balzac portray--clearly if not openly--a homosexual relationship. He does not judge, however. The fact that the arch-criminal is also an invert does not imply a criticism of homosexuality. Rather is it a passion as strong as other passions depicted throughout La Comédie humaine, less common and more hidden, but as valid and as powerful in transforming an individual.

NOTES

1. Herbert DeLey, Marcel Proust et le duc de Saint-Simon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 1966, p. 48.

2. Balzac, Le Père Goriot, Vol. II of La Comédie humaine (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1951), p. 987.

3. Balzac, Les Illusions perdues, in Vol. IV of La Comédie humaine (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1952), p. 1031.

4. Ibid., 1014.

5. Ibid., 1015.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 1026.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 1019.

10. Felicien Marceau, Balzac et son monde (Paris: Gallimard, 1955).

11. Balzac, Les Illusions perdues, p. 1032.

12. Balzac, Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes, in Vol. V of La Comédie humaine (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1952), p. 1029.

13. Ibid., 1030.

14. Ibid., 1036.

15. Ibid., 1112.

16. Bernard N. Schilling, The Hero as Failure (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 204.

DECADENCE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The Romantic conception of the artist as the pariah, as he who of necessity is an eccentric and abnormal individual, had become a commonplace by the end of the nineteenth century. It was no longer questioned that the creative man was different, strange and aberrant. Yet, aside from Balzac's world, we find no overt homosexuals in early and mid-nineteenth century French fiction. To say that "it was not considered good form, under the Second Empire, to stray too far in the direction of Sodom"[1] is too superficial a reason. It was really not necessary for an author to use an invert to represent his feeling of individuality and difference; so many other types were more readily available and were as yet "new": the foreigner, the historical character from the recently rediscovered medieval or Renaissance worlds, the poor man, the criminal were already outside the norm. Indeed the poet himself as protagonist was sufficient subject; Chatterton's dilemma would not have been rendered more agonizing by his being a homosexual. It was not only the social factor that precluded the invert's being a major type in nineteenth-century literature, but, as we shall see, an artistic one as well.

By the end of the century the misunderstood poet, the

prostitute with a "heart of gold", the lover whose desires stood in the way of development or success had become "vieux jeux". New pariahs were needed. The artist had not stopped being different and strange. His life was often characterized by a willful search for the new and bizarre; his art needed new outcasts to represent his reaction to the bourgeois life style. As the century progressed, more and more bizarre types appeared as major protagonists.

The lesbian is one of the first. Female homosexuality had been portrayed by Diderot in La Religieuse and by de Sade. But these isolated instances did not specifically single out lesbianism from a host of other "vices". It was only one of the many abnormalities of convent life for Diderot, and seems one of the tamer pursuits of de Sade's world. The spotlight centers more strongly on the lesbian as an alienated individual in Gautier, Verlaine, and Baudelaire. Although Mademoiselle de Maupin is not explicitly a homosexual, her mannish attire, her athletic endeavors and her aggressive actions set her apart from her mid-century female fictional counterparts. Verlaine's Amies are alone in their damnation.

Baudelaire's lesbians are as insistent in their defiance

of convention, of "honnêteté", as any Romantic hero. Delphine (of Femmes Damnées) raises her fist at the world just as Rastignac did from Père Lachaise. For Baudelaire the lesbian has no choice; her uncontrollable homosexual passion is a throw-back to a distant age. Her tastes are inordinately strong; she must give herself to sensuality--but her joy is always soiled. Double images of pleasure and pain, of mad laughter and tragic tears, characterize her actions. The result is a "stérile volupté". There is no middle ground, no bisexuality, for the Baudelairian lesbian. It is when Sappho gave herself to a man, "insultant le rite", that the lamentations began. Delphine desires that Hippolyte be hers completely: "On ne peut ici-bas contenter qu'un seul maître". Men are brutish and must be despised.

Yet these women seem finally less hideous than others we meet in Baudelaire's poems. They are driven by their passion, but it is because they are "chercheuses d'infini" that their love will laugh at both Heaven and Hell.

With the exception of Balzac's Vautrin, it is the female homosexual, not the male, who appears first in literature. Lesbianism was unnatural, yet less shocking than male inversion. It was not simply because the authors were men--as were their readers--but also because it would have been

much more scandalous and horrifying to taint the more sacrosanct masculinity. This is an expression of nineteenth-century male chauvinism.

If Baudelaire and Gautier opened the door, the decadents stormed in. Lesbianism runs rampant in the works of Rachilde and Mendès; it forms the entire theme of Pierre Louÿs' Les Chansons de Bilitis and is present in his Les Aventures du roi Pausole and Aphrodite. One of the real-life goddesses of the English decadents--but known on the continent as well--was the poetess Renée Vivien, a practicing and unabashed lesbian.

In addition to being lesbians, women were often portrayed in decadent art and literature as monsters, vampires, and man-eating witches--or as the complete opposite, as ethereal beings who inhabited regions far from any real world. The typical male figure was the effeminate dandy:

> De ces esthètes raffinés, Maurice du Plessys présentait le type le plus accompli. Il prenait de sa personne un soin presque féminin, portait un pantalon collant et marquait une prédilection pour le velours de son pourpoint et le vernis de ses bottines.[2]

A svelte, even emaciated, silhouette was the base of the "decadent look", which was, if the man dared (and most did), to be enhanced by jewelry, satins, velvets and furs. Jean

Lorrain wore bracelets on his arms and rings on every finger; we are far distant from Vautrin's "phalanges poilues". There need be no necessary connection between dress and sexual inclination, but in this willed modification of the traditional patterns, we must at least witness the desire to blur sexual differences. And the baubles and bangles are only the surface manifestation of what was a major metamorphosis of ideals. Proust and Gide were affected by this "milieu et moment". Let us examine the characteristics of this phenomenon which directly preceded the overt homosexual literature of the first years of the twentieth century.

The aforementioned concern with one's physical appearance reflects the importance given to the other, to the outsider, by the dandy. Simone François lists as her first "règle du dandysme":

> Feindre d'accorder une importance insolite à ses gestes, à ses démarches, à son maintien, à tout ce qui caractérise l'apparence de l'individu.[5]

There is a willful desire to have another identity and to appear as someone or something else. Indeed this is a part of the homosexual life-style--whether willed or forced--and underlies the theme of the mask in homosexual literature.

Directly corresponding with these external manifestations was the belief in and the search for the androgyne. The theme

of the man-woman in one body is fundamental to any discussion of homosexuality from Plato to Genet. Balzac had revived the legend in Séraphita, but used it to illustrate Swedenborgian mystical theories. The decadents wanted to penetrate the question of sexuality per se. For them the androgynous individual was less a theory, more a definite physical reality. Raoule says in Rachilde's Monsieur Vénus:

> --Il existe, mon ami, et ce n'est même pas un hermaphrodite, pas même un impuissant, c'est un beau mâle de vingt et un ans, dont l'âme aux instincts féminins s'est trompée d'enveloppe.[4]

Gautier himself here prefigures Proust:

> Est-ce un jeune homme? Est-ce une femme?
> Une déesse ou bien un dieu?
> L'amour ayant peur d'être infâme
> Hésite et suspend son aveu.[5]

Androgynous men and women people Péladan's La Décadence latine; one rightly thinks more of Petronius than of Plato, so physically present are these figures.

The most common form taken by the androgyne was certainly that of the ephebe and "the penchant for young boys became one of the accepted forms of non-conformity".[6] If the decadent painters and writers transformed women and adult men into unnatural beings, they kept for the male youth alone his natural form. Young men were still often painted from studies made by the otherwise-despised

academic painters. The classical ephebe will eventually come into literary prominence in the pages of Gide.

Moreover, the portraits of strong women and effeminate men reflected the decadents' belief that urban society had corrupted the natural relationships between man and woman. Art was for the esthete an "anti-nature". Chimeras, griffins, and other unnatural beasts roam the canvases of Moreau and Séon. What could be more "unnatural" than to portray the sexual union of two men or two women from which no progeny would flow? The "stérile volupté" of Baudelaire's lesbians will have to be refuted by Gide's Corydon; the description of homosexuality by means of nature imagery will be important in the works of Gide, Proust, and Genet.

In his extreme reaction to the accepted values of middle-class society, the decadent--both in his life and in his art--desired to shock. Perversions provide inherent shock value. In the "fin-de-siècle" novels, homosexuality keeps company with incest, nymphomania, sado-masochism, violence, and drug addiction. Mendès' Méphistophéla is the arch-lesbian, who, in addition to seducing every female in sight, loves her sister, prostitutes herself, and dies of an overdose of morphine. In Rachilde's Les Hors-nature the

older brother finally makes love to the younger one--before strangling him to protect the family name. Not the finest literature by any standard, nevertheless works like these were popular and did much to introduce inversion into fiction. It was usually the darker side of homosexuality which was portrayed, as it will be in the works of Julien Green.

The greatest of these decadent writers was Oscar Wilde. The epitome of decadence, Wilde's life must be considered as a major reason for the reappearance of homosexuality as a subject for discussion and its subsequent transition into literature. There was nothing mysterious or dubious about his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas which culminated in the infamous London trial. The repercussions of the evidence of the trial and the conviction of the author were known and discussed in France as well as in England. (Indeed Gide's mother was quite distressed to learn that her son had known this horribly perverted man.)

The link between Wilde and Gide was very specific. Gide's own revelations in <u>Si le grain ne meurt...</u> confirm Wilde's influence on him during his second visit to North Africa. Wilde perceptively grasped the sexual dilemma of the young Frenchman; his taking him to visit a young African

boy was perhaps the very act by which Gide began to comprehend his own sexual orientation.[7] We shall later see that Gide's very conception of homosexuality is in part based on this early confrontation with one type of uranian relationship.

The personage of Oscar Wilde was a kind of living symbol of the decadent's plunge into homosexuality. The desire to explore new areas of experience and both to be and appear different is at the base of the esthetes' yearnings. Homosexuality, if not new, was certainly different: perverted, anti-natural, sterile, androgynous. For the dandy who was disgusted by the bourgeois society and mores of the day, horrified by the women this society had spawned, who cultivated vice for its own sake, who smoked hashish and drank absinthe, homosexuality could no longer be condemned or ridiculed. Through both his life and his art, the decadent created the foyer of the house which twentieth-century writers were about to erect.

NOTES

1. Philippe Jullian, Dreamers of Decadence, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 113.

2. Noël Richard, Le Mouvement décadent (Paris: Nizet, 1968), p. 253.

3. Simone François, Le Dandysme et Marcel Proust (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies), 1956, p. 26.

4. Rachilde, Monsieur Vénus (Paris: Flammarion, 1926), p. 96.

5. Théophile Gautier, Contralto.

6. Jullian, p. 113.

7. Jean Delay has probed the psychological effect of Wilde on Gide. See bibliography.

PROUST'S PRECONCEPTIONS

The decadents were intoxicated with the idea that female spirits inhabited male bodies and that masculine attributes were to be found in women. The often bizarre creatures that appear in the paintings and literature at the close of the nineteenth century reflect not only a taste for the strange and exotic, but also an awakening interest in the very nature of sexual identity. Balzac had made some very preliminary observations, especially through the character of Lucien de Rubempré. Yet most nineteenth-century writers were not even aware of such a question: Julien Sorel's struggle is not with the nature of his masculinity, nor Emma Bovary's with her femininity.

During the last two decades of the century, at the same time as the creative artists were depicting new types of sexual beings on their pages and canvases, the scientists were also beginning to explore the nature of sexuality. The concern with the basic structure of one's individual sexuality is a twentieth-century phenomenon whose roots extend back to the studies initiated by nineteenth-century psychologists such as Tardieu, Moll, Binet, Magnan, and Chevalier. Their theories of the "abnormal" led them to rethink and redefine what had always been accepted without

question--the "normal". In matters of sexuality, inversion was the perfect subject and the scientific literature of the time contains more homosexual case studies than those relating to other "perversions".

In his dissection of sexuality into its masculine and feminine components, Marcel Proust is fully of his time. Indeed he plays the psychologist-scientist in his laboratory, and the observation of change in the supposedly heterosexual characters into homosexual ones appears to have offered Proust a great variety of possible experiments. Yet he is the complete antithesis of the scientist in that his pre-conceptions about homosexuality are so strong that they dominate any truly detached research and observation. Proust accepts certain a priori concepts which color all his subsequent study. These assumptions are two-fold and lie at the base of his entire depiction of homosexuality. Both are synonymous with the theory of the nature of inversion propounded by the German psychologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing. George Painter declares:

> But Proust may well have selected it (Charlus' flagellation) from one of the naïve natural histories of perversion then still current, such as Kraft-Ebbing's Psychopathia Sexualis, one of which he read at this time, not without disapproval. "It seems that even vice has now become one of the exact sciences," he commented with rueful irony to Paul Morand.[1]

Yet Painter forgets that Krafft-Ebing's work was not considered at all "naïve" at the moment when Proust would have read it. Psychopathia Sexualis, first published in 1886, was based both on theories advanced by the most respected psychologists of the day and also on specific case studies.

> ...at the time, Psychopathia Sexualis was the most systematic and comprehensive work of its kind. It became a source of data for much subsequent writing, including Freud's.[2]
>
> --Krafft-Ebing then gave, on the basis of the cases published up to 1877, the first exhaustive scientific exposition of homosexuality.[3]

Krafft-Ebing was the master, the authority. Whether or not Proust disapproved of "the natural histories of perversion", he cannot have failed to have been affected by them, especially since they offered the only "verifiable" description of the condition he saw within himself.

What is the nature of homosexuality for Krafft-Ebing? For the doctor, as for Proust, inversion is not environmentally caused, but is inherited. Krafft-Ebing did originally have difficulty accounting for uranism which appeared late in a person's life. He at first attempted to distinguish "congenital" from "acquired" homosexuality, but ultimately rejected any separation:

> Those who hold to the opinion that the origin of homosexual feelings and instinct is found to be exclusively in defective education and other psychological influences are entirely in error.
>
> An untainted male may be raised ever so much like a female and a female like a male, but they will not become homosexual. The natural disposition is the determining condition: not education and other accidental circumstances, like seduction.[4]

The doctor reiterates, again using the word "taint": "In fact, in all cases of sexual inversion, a taint of a hereditary character may be established."[5] And again: "Untainted man will never become sexually inverted."[6] Krafft-Ebing;s infatuation with the word "taint" recalls Proust's "tare"; for both men, homosexuality is a kind of stain. It is a genetic trait, "plainly to be found in the germ of procreation".[7] For Proust the "germ" originates in Sodom and Gomorrah. Nowhere in A la recherche du temps perdu do we learn of Charlus' childhood; we are to assume that this incarnation of homosexuality was always an invert. When inversion suddenly appears in one of his characters, Proust does not examine whether or not it might be as the result of his experiences in life. The homosexual is, he does not become. Inversion has been there all along and finally decides to manifest itself--but for no specific reason.[8]

When Proust's narrator learns of his friend Saint-Loup's inversion, rather than questioning why it has appeared, or whether Saint-Loup's life itself--his frustrations with Rachel, his military life, etc.--has caused it, he simply assumes that it was always there, only hidden or disguised. Marcel re-examines his past relationship with his good friend and re-interprets it under the assumption that Saint-Loup has always liked men. In addition, he now sees similarities between Charlus and his nephew which are simply linked to an inherited seed. One of Saint-Loup's gestures is "...une sorte de répétition involontaire d'un geste ancestral...de Charlus."[9]

Secondly, Proust also assumes from the start that the homosexual is a man-woman, a feminine personality dwelling in a man's body (and a masculine character hidden in a lesbian). This theory of the "man-woman", the "homme-femme" is also that of Krafft-Ebing:

> Certain it is that these persons are, as a rule, also abnormal as far as character is concerned. They are neither man nor woman, a mixture of both, with secondary psychical and physical characteristics of the one as well as the other sex, which grow out of the interfering influences of a bisexual predisposition and disturb the development of a well-defined and complete being.[10]

He accounts for this phenomenon in postulating a residual bisexuality which has not yet been completely eliminated

by "the tendency of nature in the present stage of evolution"[11] to produce monosexual individuals.

Charlus is the most obvious example of the "homme-femme". This man who appears so virile on the surface is in reality a disguised woman. When he is under emotional stress--as at the Verdurins' party for Morel--or when he thinks he is unobserved--as in the Guermantes' courtyard--Charlus' true nature, that of a woman, clearly surfaces. His actions become feminine: at one moment he is "une femme pudibonde" pushing a handkerchief into his pocket. His voice is compared to the voices of a girls' choir; he appears in the narrator's line of vision envelopped in a skirt. His tastes, his voice, his appearance--all become feminine after the narrator has learned that he is a homosexual.

All homosexual characters in A la recherche partake of the "homme-femme" theory. The way Morel tosses his lock of hair is feminine. The "jeunes filles en fleurs" are re-examined after Albertine's death and Marcel now sees them as perhaps too aggressive to have been completely feminine. The Marquis de Vaugoubert "wore the skirts" and his wife is simply "un homme". Even before A la recherche Proust had adopted the "man-woman" hypothesis: the young boy languishing on the beach in "Une Race maudite" already

uses powder and tints his hair--without really knowing why.

Thus it is extremely important at the outset to recognize Proust's two basic assumptions about homosexuality. If he did not even consider environment as a cause of inversion (à la Freud), neither did he depict a pederast, such as Gide's Edouard or Michel. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the two authors. Proust's basic outlook (and perhaps his final vision) was limited by the theory that homosexuality was, like hubris, a human flaw. And his conception of all homosexuals as "hommes-femmes"--as a "third sex"--narrowed the scope of his world. The portrayal in <u>depth</u> of this particular type of homosexual is without equal in literature; but the exclusion of other kinds of inverts from the world of <u>A la recherche</u> led to a limitation in <u>breadth</u>. Gide--who, conversely, depicted only another form of inversion, pederasty, in his fictional works--realized both his own and Proust's failure to consider a different type. He wrote in a note to the preface of <u>Corydon</u>:

> Certains livres--ceux de Proust en particulier--...ont beaucoup contribué, je le crains, à égarer l'opinion. La théorie de l'homme-femme, des 'Sexuelle Zwischenstufen' (degrés intermédiaires de la sexualité) que lançait le Dr. Hirschfeld en Allemagne, assez longtemps déjà avant la guerre, et à laquelle Marcel Proust semble se ranger--peut bien n'être point fausse; mais elle n'explique et ne concerne que certains

> cas d'homosexualité, ceux dont précisément je ne m'occupe pas dans ce livre--les cas d'inversion, d'efféminement, de sodomie. Et je vois bien aujourd'hui qu'un des grands défauts de mon livre est précisément de ne m'occuper point d'eux--qui se découvrent être beaucoup plus fréquents que je ne le croyais d'abord.
>
> Et mettons que, ceux-ci, la théorie de Hirschfeld les satisfasse. Cette théorie du 'troisième sexe' ne saurait aucunement expliquer ce que l'on a coutume d'appeler 'l'amour grec': la pédérastie--qui ne comporte efféminement aucun, de part ni d'autre.[12]

The two unquestioned assumptions about the nature of homosexuality are evident in Proust's portrait of the young Mlle Vinteuil. For the author Mlle Vinteuil is an innate homosexual; we witness neither her birth nor her evolution. She is first seen as the young daughter of the composer friend of the narrator's parents. The mother being dead, the daughter is in many ways a replica of her father. Like M. Vinteuil, his daughter has the same way of regarding a situation: both automatically place themselves in the position of the listener. The father "se mettant toujours à la place des autres, ...craignait de les ennuyer et de leur paraître égoiste s'il suivait ou seulement laissait deviner son désir".[13] The daughter: "Quand elle venait de prononcer une parole, elle l'entendait avec l'esprit de ceux à qui elle l'avait dite..."[14] This basic similarity of <u>character</u> between father and daughter is reflected also in the <u>physical</u>

doubling. Already the young girl shows the characteristics of the "homme-femme". Her father is overly careful for her, being constantly ready to cover her with cloaks and shawls. But in spite of the piles of coats, the girl is not frail and is actually the exact opposite of what her father believes her to be. Strong, robust, with a masculine face and the appearance of a boy, it is she who will always be driving the buggy. Mlle Vinteuil is a latent lesbian as a young girl, unbeknownst to herself and to others; she is already a lesbian, she will not develop into one. Homosexuality is part of her essence.

Proust is considered one of the most perceptive social and psychological observers of the century, but his search probed neither the fundamental nature nor the cause of homosexuality. The construction of his homosexual world may be likened to St. Thomas' religious edifice: all is beautifully believable if the cornerstones--whether the "man-woman taint" or God--are accepted de principio.

NOTES

1. George D. Painter, Proust: The Later Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965) p. 270. (Painter misspells the doctor's name.)

2. Ernest Van Den Haag, Introduction to Psychopathia Sexualis (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 13.

3. Alexander Hartwich, Aberrations of Sexual Life (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 290.

4. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 312 Emphasis by the author.

5. Ibid., 370.

6. Ibid., 371.

7. Ibid.

8. Similarly, Krafft-Ebing was finally forced to admit that "acquired" homosexuality is rather "retarded" homosexuality.

9. Marcel Proust, A la recherche du temps perdu (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1954), III, 685.

10. Krafft-Ebing, 464.

11. Ibid., 366.

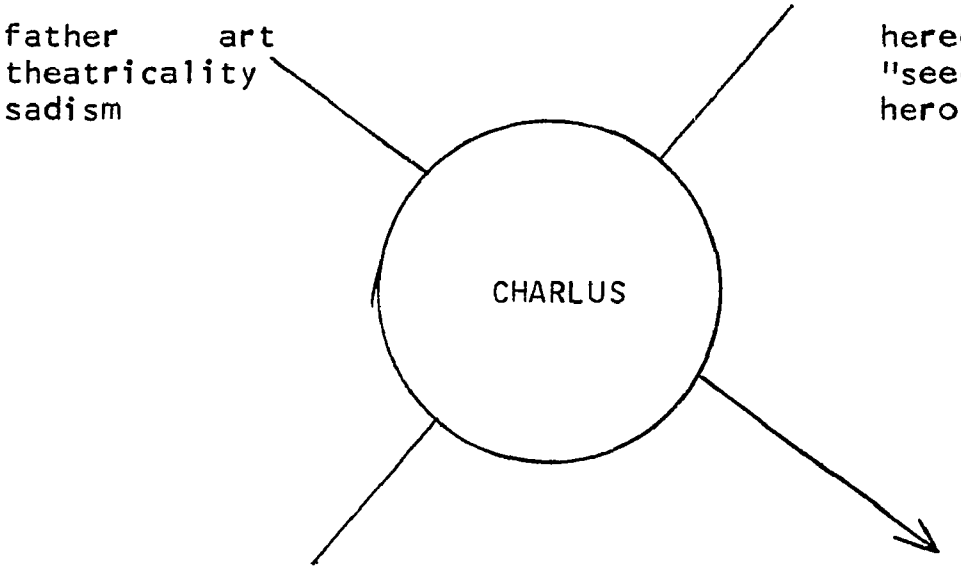
12. André Gide, Corydon (Paris: Gallimard, 1925), pp. 8-9.

13. Proust, I, 113.

14. Ibid.

THE HOMOSEXUAL STRUCTURE OF A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU

SCHEMA I



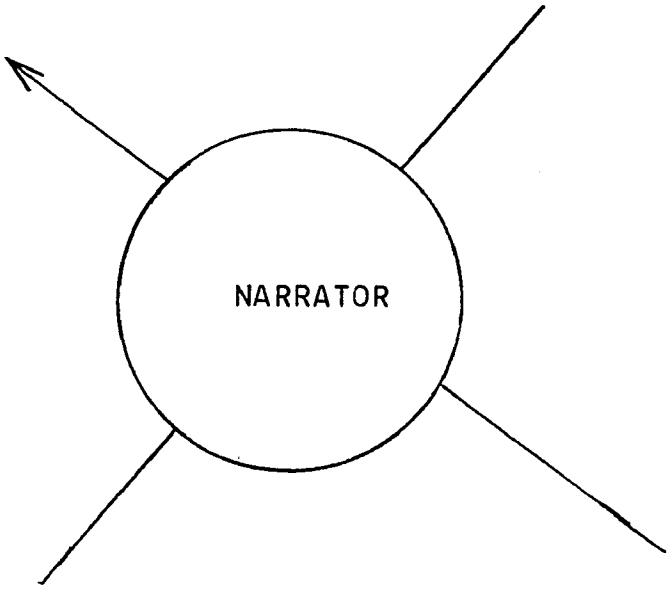
SCHEMA II

"LES MERES"

art

GILBERTE

biological reproduction
conscious evocation of past



ALBERTINE

human love

HOSTESSES

(La Duchesse de Guermantes, Mme Verdurin)

world

THE HOMOSEXUAL STRUCTURE OF A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU

> Remembrance of Things Past is...a total vision, it does not rely on any system outside itself for support.[1]

The baron de Charlus is the homosexual par excellence. In himself he embodies all characteristics of homosexuality which Proust chose to consider. His great physical size is the symbol of this incorporation in space; his presence in the novel from Combray to Le Temps retrouvé is the symbol in time. In addition to this massive and abiding presence, his psychological complexity and his ability to wear various masks--both conscious and unconscious--make him the nucleus around which the other homosexual protagonists of the novel gravitate like satellites. At the same time Charlus reflects each of them within himself.

Besides Charlus there are four major homosexual characters in A la recherche: Saint-Loup, Morel, Jupien and Mademoiselle Vinteuil. None of the four is as complete as Charlus, for each represents only certain aspects of homosexuality. It is as if Charlus were reflected by four mirrors placed around him, each mirror returning a true, but only partial, image. Or, in terms of an often-used analogy,

Charlus is the major theme in a symphony--here a homosexual one--in which the other four characters are but variations on the theme.

Not only are these four individuals symbols of basic homosexual types, they are also possible answers to the homosexual dilemma. They are "ways". If Proust's work were entitled A la recherche de Charlus, it would have four major subdivisions: "Du côté de Saint-Loup", "Du côté de Morel", "Du côté de Jupien", and "Du côté de Mlle Vinteuil". Each of the four satellites is therefore a symbol with two different meanings: first, the reflection of personality and sexual traits, and secondly, a path which the homosexual might follow to find satisfaction or salvation. Let us consider the first aspect of this homosexual structure, the "mirror" aspect.

Charlus' nephew Saint-Loup represents heredity--both homosexual and heterosexual. Proust portrays this both in terms of the past and in terms of the future. From the past comes, on the one hand, the Guermantes' lineage, the heritage of the aristocracy of the Middle Ages, and, on the homosexual side, the hereditary "bad seed" of inversion which goes back to Biblical times. When his homosexuality is discovered late in the novel by the narrator, Marcel reiterates again

and again his bewilderment over this revelation. He can give only one explanation for it: Saint-Loup's inversion is another late flowering of a seed which was planted in Sodom.

Looking forward rather than backward, Saint-Loup is the only one of the homosexuals who has a child. Of the four characters we are considering, he is the only one who dies within the pages of the novel, yet the only one who has produced progeny.

The resemblances between Saint-Loup and Charlus are stressed by Proust, both in terms of their similarity as Guermantes and as homosexuals. The latter similarities become even greater as the nephew moves more and more into his inversion. It is he who takes Charlus' place with Morel. The finding of the croix de guerre reveals Saint-Loup's presence in his uncle's brothel. "...il était comme un successeur...de M. de Charlus."[2]

Moreover, Saint-Loup is the warrior, the conqueror, the hero. His life centers around the military and we leave him as he dies gloriously in battle. In this guise he is the most "male" of the four who surround Charlus. Proust began with the conception that every invert had both male and female aspects to his personality. The degree to which

each component was more prevalent varied from homosexual to homosexual. In each of the four satellite characters we are considering, the relationship between the "homme" and the "femme" is different. Saint-Loup is the "man-woman" and the balance tilts toward the male side. His "warrior" quality is the first proof of this fact, but it is also reflected in the time sequence of the novel. For the greatest part of A la recherche--until the end of La Fugitive--Robert de Saint-Loup is a heterosexual (at least in the narrator's eyes). His affair with Rachel is portrayed at length; his friend Marcel even fears his influence on Albertine. He marries and has a child. His homosexuality is revealed only late in the novel, although it had been a part of his life all along. It is probable that Proust deliberately kept his warrior's inversion secret to give more weight to the male side of his personality. When the "defect" is discovered, it is only then that Saint-Loup appears enveloped in women's skirts and shows "un air efféminé".[3]

This male side of the "homme-femme" is not lacking in Charlus, who is neither a passive homosexual nor a passive individual. (Indeed Saint-Loup himself is blind to the homosexuality of his uncle and sees only his excessive virility.) Besides being the lion of society, his attempts

to seduce Marcel, his protection and advancement of Morel, and, most symbolically, his role of the bee in the Guermantes' courtyard, bear witness to the active, the male, side of the homosexual nature. Charlus' proposal of a duel to avenge Morel's honor is a comic and pathetic transposition of his nephew's role of warrior.

If Saint-Loup is the "man-woman" (or the "active male principle") Morel is the "woman-man" (or "active female principle"). Again this is portrayed by his life in chronological time. Morel is first--and most often--seen as the homosexual lover of Charlus. It is only after their rupture that Morel does have an affair with a woman:

> ...deux ans après avoir quitté M. de Charlus, il s'était épris d'une femme avec laquelle il vivait et qui, ayant plus de volonté que lui, avait su lui imposer une fidélité absolue. De sorte que Morel, qui au temps où M. de Charlus lui donnait tant d'argent avait donné pour cinquante francs une nuit au prince de Guermantes, n'aurait pas accepté du même ou de tout autre quoi que ce fût, lui offrît-on cinquante mille francs.[4]

Both Morel and Saint-Loup are bisexuals, but their tastes for men or women move in opposite directions in time--and even cross at one point, their liaison.

It is the homosexual relationship between Morel and Charlus that concerns us here. And in this respect Morel is the "femme". From the moment the two meet on the platform

at Doncières, Proust makes their future "ménage" clear:

> Et me rappelant la façon dont M. de Charlus était venu vers Morel et moi, je saisissais sa ressemblance avec certains de ses parents quand ils levaient une femme dans la rue. Seulement l'objet visé avait changé de sexe.[5]

The fact that Morel is the "femme" does not imply that he is an overly-feminine homosexual. His virility is not lacking--and Charlus notices it first--but it springs primarily from his youth. It is the "nervous masculinity" of the adolescent; Morel is closer to Genet's Roger or Divers than he is to Divine.

> M. de Charlus vit avec ravissement ce geste autoritaire et viril, manié par la main gracieuse pour qui il aurait dû être encore trop lourd, trop massivement brutal, avec une fermeté et une souplesse précoces qui donnaient à cet adolescent encore imberbe l'air d'un jeune David capable d'assumer un combat contre Goliath.[6]

The basic anatomical fact ("la main gracieuse") is feminine: the "geste autoritaire et viril" is tacked on.

In the subsequent affair with Charlus, Morel plays the more passive role. The baron is the motivating force, the leader, the protector, and the mentor. It is he who organizes the soirée at Madame Verdurin's, who arranges a marriage between Jupien's niece and his protégé, and who offers to die for his beloved in a duel. But although he might be passive in this specific relationship, Morel is

not a passive individual. On the contrary, he is very aggressive when his career or his finances are involved. He will do anything to succeed as a violinist and places his success in this area above everything. Money is also one of the motivations of his actions:

> --Ce garçon qui, pour peu qu'il y trouvât de l'argent, eût fait n'importe quoi...ce garçon qui mettait d'argent au-dessus de tout...ce même garçon mettait pourtant au-dessus de l'argent son diplôme de Ier prix du Conservatoire et qu'on ne pût tenir aucun propos désobligeant sur lui à la classe de flûte ou de contrepoint.[7]

Morel's active side is also his unappealing side. He is the handsome and unprincipled young man taking advantage of an aging homosexual who sincerely cares for him. In following the Charlus-Morel affair, the reader empathizes more with Charlus; Morel is the cad. Proust brilliantly arranged this reaction and it accounts in part for the absence of disgust and revulsion on the part of the reader toward Charlus.[8]

Morel is vain and ambitious, unlike his opposite, Saint-Loup. Further contrasts may be made between the two. If Saint-Loup stood with his heritage and his family, Morel despises his background and begs the narrator never to reveal to Charlus--or to anyone--who his father was. He has brothers and sisters, but has disregarded them. Saint-

Loup marries Gilberte and has a child by her; Morel thinks of his planned marriage to Jupien's niece only as a means of procuring a female pimp for himself. If Saint-Loup dies as a hero, Morel is a deserter.

He is a "poseur".[9] Even before his encounter with Charlus, this is made evident through the scene in which he arrives at the narrator's with photographs from his late uncle's collection.[10] They are photos of actresses and Morel might symbolically be considered as one among them. Like an actress, Morel is a woman who wears a mask. Indeed, of the four satellite homosexuals he wears the most masks--and makes his choice to suit himself alone. He is also a liar, not by necessity but by choice. This is his unappealing side, and, by being simultaneously a "femme", and an active one, he symbolizes a malevolent <u>anima</u> figure. In a similar Jungian context, Saint-Loup would be the benevolent <u>animus</u> figure.

Morel mirrors another side of Charlus. In this aspect, we have Charlus the show-off, whose vanity is almost as strong as Morel's. This is the Charlus who wears makeup and is coy with the Surgis brothers and occasionally with Marcel. This is the Charlus wearing the actress' mask, draped on his sofa in an Oriental gown. He has <u>consciously</u>

donned this attire in his desire to appear more feminine; it is the "côté Morel". When the narrator describes him as "quasi enveloppé par l'immense jupe de la comtesse Molé,[11] the metaphor reflects an unconscious feminine characteristic; this is the "côté Saint-Loup".

> Il avait de la bonté, de la pitié, les sentiments les plus délicats, les plus généreux.[12]

Such is Jupien, who stands in striking contrast to Morel, and who is first mentioned in the novel by Marcel's grandmother as "l'homme le plus distingué, le mieux qu'elle eût jamais vu".[13] Such praise, such superlatives, from "the exemplar and criterion of all virtue in the book",[14] are reinforced by Françoise, another respected character of the novel.

In the homosexual cosmos of Proust's work, Jupien is the brightest star. In him are represented kindness, tenderness, devotion, and stability. He is intelligent and sensitive. From his initial encounter with Charlus to the end of the novel, he cares for the aging man as would a mother. Jupien is compared to Sancho Panza, to Lear's fool and to Antigone leading her blind father. Yet the image of a loving and understanding mother is more cogent in the homosexual and Proustian context. Jupien is a mother figure, yet a mother who is exceedingly wise in the ways of the homosexual world and helps and loves without

criticizing or setting moral standards. He helps Charlus in surprising Morel "en flagrant délit" in the Maineville brothel and later buys and runs Charlus's own male brothel.

Jupien is the most untarnished major male character in the novel. However, in any sexual balance sheet, he is a "femme-femme", both in his role as "mother" and in his passivity. He is the orchid, the plant around which the bee Charlus buzzes. We know about his sexual encounter with the baron, and the role he plays in it. However, we learn absolutely nothing about his other affairs, if indeed there are any, although we are told about the various liaisons of Morel and Saint-Loup. Their absence reflects his faithfulness to the baron. Jupien is several times associated with the "pure" female characters of the novel. He symbolizes the good anima figure, and is a composite of the age-old positive attributes of the female spirit.

That the traits of Jupien are also found in Charlus' homosexuality is evident. He is sincerely devoted to Swann, to Marcel, to Jupien's niece and others. In addition to loving Morel, he "mothers" him. The goodness of Charlus--of the homosexual--is not absent from Proust's world, even though too many critics have seen nothing but the sordid aspects. In the brothel scene of Le Temps retrouvé Charlus

has not been satisfied by Maurice's whipping, but he does not let his notorious anger burst out against the youth:

> --Je ne voulais pas parler devant ce petit, qui est très gentil et fait de son mieux.[13]

The estime in which Charlus is held by the grandmother and by Françoise again bears witness to this positive side of our composite homosexual.

The fourth and final mirror which surrounds and reflects Charlus is the strangest of all: Mlle Vinteuil. Can we consider her as important a homosexual character and symbol as Saint-Loup, Morel, and Jupien? She actually appears only twice in the novel: once as the young girl driving with her father and then in the scene at Montjouvain. In the first case she is hidden by the piles of coats, in the second she is seen only from a distance by the narrator. As a character who is physically present in the novel, she is less important than Vaugoubert or Léa. Yet her symbolic presence is enormous; it is central to the entire sexual structure of A la recherche. She is the shadow who hovers over la Prisonnière and la Fugitive. The narrator's anguish, his jealousy and his doubts will not be conquered until he learns the truth about Albertine's link with Mlle Vinteuil. She, like the Jungian shadow,[16] is the symbol of Marcel's

deepest fears; without bringing those fears into his consciousness, he will never know the completeness of a relationship with Albertine. (And, of course, he never does, for the real truth is never discovered. It is only Albertine's death and the passage of time which allow him to forget her. The shadow of Mlle Vinteuil remains a shadow and there is not a conscious resolution of the Albertine enigma.)

Mlle Vinteuil is the mirror-image of her father, as we have seen the first time she appears. A woman and a practicing lesbian, she is ironically the most "male" of the four major homosexual characters. She is as exclusive a homosexual as is Jupien and stands in apposition to him as Morel stands in relation to Saint-Loup. The latter two are bisexuals; Mlle Vinteuil has not even the bisexual possibility of Albertine or Andrée. She is always linked with her "amie", and the two stand together as one symbol. Mlle Vinteuil and her friend represent the "homme-homme" in the homosexual structure of A la recherche. She is the male figure because of the link with her father and her lesbianism, and also because of her sadism.

Sadism is active, a symbol of masculinity, power, and domination. The one specific act which is performed at

Montjouvain is the spitting on the photograph of Mlle Vinteuil's father. Might we not equate this act with male ejaculation? By this gesture, Mlle Vinteuil and her friend are symbolically more "male" than even Saint-Loup.

The sadism of Mlle Vinteuil and her friend represents not only maleness, but also, and simultaneously, the theatricality of the mask. Proust has taken great care to explain the sadistic urges of this woman which are not the result of a purely evil nature, but rather the manifestation of a profound tendency toward the good:

> --Une sadique comme elle est l'artiste du mal, ce qu'une créature entièrement mauvaise ne pourrait être, car le mal ne lui serait pas extérieur, il lui semblerait tout naturel, ne se distinguerait même pas d'elle; et la vertu, la mémoire des morts, la tendresse filiale, comme elle n'en aurait pas le culte, elle ne trouverait pas un plaisir sacrilège à les profaner. Les sadiques de l'espèce de Mlle Vinteuil sont des êtres si purement sentimentaux, si naturellement vertueux que même le plaisir sensuel leur paraît quelque chose de mauvais, le privilège des méchants. Et quand ils se concèdent à eux-mêmes de s'y livrer un moment, c'est dans la peau des méchants qu'ils tâchent d'entrer et de faire entrer leur complice, de façon à avoir eu un moment l'illusion de s'être évadés de leur âme scrupuleuse et tendre, dans le monde inhumain du plaisir. Et je comprenais combien elle l'eût désiré en voyant combien il lui était impossible d'y réussir.[17]

As Proust realized, as Sartre will later demonstrate in his theses on Baudelaire and Genet, and as Divine herself will exemplify, evil is not possible without a belief that the

good does exist. Thus does the sadism of Mlle Vinteuil bespeak a lie. It is a mask which she unconsciously wears, an illusion. The entire scene at Montjouvain is a theatrical performance: Marcel is the audience who, in the darkness, watches the lighted scene on stage. The women leave the window open deliberately. Both of them resemble actresses playing roles and their words, their looks, and their actions betray the fact that the roles have not been perfectly learned.

The direct reflection of Mlle Vinteuil in Charlus appears in his own sadistic game in his brothel. It is another performance in which Charlus is not at all satisfied because Maurice is a poor actor. The sadistic play is a sterile sham in both cases. Charlus also reflects the "father aspect" in his plans for the marriage of Morel with Jupien's niece. He does eventually adopt her and gives her one of his family names so that she may marry into society. The baron himself stands thus <u>in loco patris</u>.

Mlle Vinteuil--and also the other three satellite homosexuals--is the symbol of yet something else. If a mirror reflects, it also projects. If the mirror returns the image of a man, it also enables this man to look forward into the mirror, yet, at the same time, the look into the future is nothing more than the projection of the past, of what is in effect behind him. We have seen that

each of the four major homosexual characters who surround the primary homosexual figure of the baron de Charlus reflect aspects of his inversion which are all incorporated into his encompassing central figure. But each of the four is more than that; each symbolizes a direction which the homosexual might take to give meaning to his stained existence.

If the name "Vinteuil" evokes sadism, lesbianism, and the father figure, it also evokes, perhaps even more powerfully, artistic creation. It is again the reflection of the father in the daughter. There are two sides to this symbol. The first is the simple fact that theater is artistic creation, whether it is the disguising of the boyish Mlle Vinteuil under the overcoats or her mask of sadism on the Montjouvain stage. More important is the deciphering, preserving and presentation to the world of the musical masterpieces of Vinteuil-père. It is only through the devoted efforts of Mlle Vinteuil and her friend--her double--that the works of Vinteuil were not left in their fragmentary state.

Morel's recital at Mme Verdurin's is the central scene of the homosexual structure of <u>A la recherche</u>. The two events which dominate it reflect both the heights and

depths of Proust's conception of inversion. The hypocrisy of Mme Verdurin and her guests which leads to the unmasking of the baron in the throes of his too-blinding love for Morel, is its dark side. It is the beginning of Charlus' descent. Before this catastrophe, Morel has played the Vinteuil Septet for the first time. It is one of the supreme moments of artistic creation for the narrator and causes his joy to overflow, invoking involuntary memory and evoking the complex and beautiful past of Combray. This ecstatic moment is the fruit of the combined efforts of Mlle Vinteuil, her friend, Morel, and Charlus--four homosexuals. The passage is one of the great crescendos of the Proustian symphony and unquestionably the most powerful and most beautiful paean to homosexuality before Genet. The vicious side of inversion is here obliterated by the contribution which the four have made to the creation of an eternal work of art.

Here is one of the "ways" toward meaning in the homosexual's life: the giving of himself to art. It is the highest path, and Proust's final answer. But this way is not chosen by Charlus who, in spite of this momentary contribution, will always remain a dilettante in art. Both the narrator's and Proust's lives lead to the conclusion

that art is born through toil and constant dedication. Proust the author went further than Charlus. If he had followed the example of him whom he was later to create, if he had let his homosexuality take precedence over the labor involved in artistic creation, there might have been a few volumes of poetry à la Montesquiou, but no A la recherche.

Charlus does not choose to enter into the "way" symbolized by Mlle Vinteuil. A second path is closed to him from the outset: the way of Saint-Loup, the way of family and biological reproduction. This road is open to the homosexual, but it must remain basically unsatisfactory and superficial since the homosexual will not reach fulfillment with a woman--the "defect" is too strong.[18]

The third way is that of Morel: the way of human love. On this path Charlus does set forth. Love might save the homosexual and Charlus penetrates into the profundity of this mirror more fully than he does into the ways offered by Saint-Loup and Mlle Vinteuil. Here the mirror-image is even more pertinent. But the uniting of two images into one by means of love is impossible for Proust. It is not only the object chosen for his love that prefigures defeat for Charlus, but also the very basic nature of love for Proust.

Thus there remains only Jupien and his "way": the way of the world. Jupien, the tailor and manager of the brothel, represents the daily business of sewing on buttons and arranging sexual trysts. This is the way Charlus chooses, the only way left to him after his love affair with Morel is crushed. It is marked by the flagellations and theatricality of the brothel, but reflects also Jupien's goodness and earthiness. It is the way of most homosexuals--and most men; it is the road most often traveled because it is either the only one, or at least the easiest one. It is the way that the young Proust himself chose in his incessant frequenting of the salons, in his sexual scenes with butcher-boys and bloody rats, but also in his great kindness and concern for his friends. Charlus takes this road to its inevitable end. In his final scene he is still with Jupien. Morel is gone, Saint-Loup is dead and Mlle Vinteuil still a shadow. But Jupien is there to mother his beloved friend, to be Lear's fool. Charlus performs an act which disturbs Marcel because it is so incongruous: he greets Mme de Sainte-Euverte in a very friendly manner. This gesture toward a woman whom he had despised and ridiculed for his entire life forces the narrator to give several possible reasons for his change in attitude. But may it not be simply a symbol of the victory of Jupien?

Charlus chose the way of the world, rejecting art and procreation and in turn being rejected by love. Charlus is what Proust was before the cup of tea and the uneven flagstones. He is the universal homosexual--here despised, there loved--but, ultimately, the homosexual who does not rise above his very condition by the only means which Proust considered valid--artistic creation.

We have considered Charlus as the center of a homosexual structure of A la recherche du temps perdu. Around him circulate the four other major homosexuals, and it would be possible to add another ring of the other inverts of the novel: M. de Vaugoubert, M. de Norpois, Léa, M. de Châtellerault--smaller variations on similar themes which produce the whirlpool of homosexuality of which Charlus is the vortex.

Yet Charlus is not the nucleus of the novel; the narrator is. A similar structure, with the "je" as the core, may be postulated. It is a larger overlay of the homosexual structure, with the narrator standing in the middle of four mirrors. Four characters (or groups of characters) offer the same four "ways" offered to the homosexual.

In this design Gilberte takes the place held by Saint-Loup. Like her husband she is the symbol of heredity,

biological reproduction and the past. It is Gilberte that Marcel first dreams of marrying. When she appears in the novel, it is almost always in a "family" context: first as the daughter of the Swanns and later as the wife and mother of Tansonville. But the narrator does not marry her; he chooses creation over procreation.

Moreover, it is through Gilberte that Marcel, in Le Temps retrouvé, tries to consciously ressurect the past. But his attempt to capture the happiness of childhood years at Combray and on the Champs-Elysées fails; the past cannot reappear in its fullness by our consciously reliving it. The "way of Gilberte" will not work.

Albertine offers to the narrator what Morel offered to Charlus: the way of love and duplicity. Like Morel, she is a character compounded of deceit and doubt. If Charlus could not be sure whether Morel was actually at an algebra class or with another man, Marcel never does learn clearly what Albertine was doing at Versailles or with the young laundress. He pursues the path of love further than does Charlus, but neither of them reaches the end. Here the homosexual theme is almost the exact image of the heterosexual one. Love does not bear fruit, no matter the gender of the lovers.

The third way is the way Charlus chose, the way of the world. In the narrator's cosmos, this path is symbolized by the society hostesses--especially the duchesse de Guermantes and Mme Verdurin. This is the way chosen by Marcel until he eventually perceives the hypocrisy in it and its collapse under the rotting influence of time. It is both good and bad, positive and negative. But it remains for Marcel--though not for Charlus--unfulfilling.

There remains the fourth way, the way of art. For the narrator this road is symbolized by the "mother figures": primarily his own mother and grandmother, but also, to a lesser degree, by tante Léonie and Françoise. In these women of perfection, these goddesses, are incarnated artistic creation which for the homosexual was represented by Mlle Vinteuil. Marcel will take this road to "salvation", whereas Charlus did not.

The juxtaposing of "les mères" with Mlle Vinteuil shows why Marcel, but not Charlus, ultimately succeeded. First, although the element of the mask and of theatricality is lightly and humorously present in tante Léonie (her illness) and in Françoise (the "queen of the kitchen"), it is totally absent from both his mother and grandmother. They are above any lies, any game-playing. Secondly, in

contrast to the active masculine sadism of Mlle Vinteuil, the mothers are passive symbols of unearthly love. Mlle Vinteuil and her lover were lesbians and therefore "unfruitful" women. The mother and grandmother, on the other hand, represent the archetypal female principle, a combination of earth-mother and heavenly mother, Terra and the Virgin Mary. Thus the negative aspects--the theatricality and the masculinity--of Mlle Vinteuil are absent from the symbol of the mothers.

But the positive side, that of artistic creation, is present in its purest form. Not only did his grandmother present him with books, she took him to see la Berma and insisted that he visit Elstir. His mother gave him life. "Creation" plus "art": both words take on a profound meaning. The masculine symbol of spitting is turned into the feminine gesture of a kiss.

There is salvation for Marcel whereas there is none for Charlus. It is in art that this salvation lies, and artistic creation is the reflection of the female principle. In considering the four characters who revolve around Charlus, we notice that there are three biological males and one female. There is discord in the homosexual house. Encompassing Marcel, we have only female characters.

The circle is purer, of one gender only. No male character in A la recherche has the effect on the inner development of the narrator as does any of the four female figures--not even Charlus, not even Swann. Marcel learned from Bergotte, from Elstir and from Vinteuil, but he did not begin to write because of them. For art is born not from imitation, but from a uniting with the unconscious archetypal sources of creation itself, with the female principle, with "the mothers". He began to write because of a search for a mother's kiss shrouded in lost time and its rebirth caused by the taste of a madeleine (the cake has a feminine name) dipped in tea (tea - water - feminine symbol) and offered to him by a woman.

There are not just two ways, there are four. Each is offered to both Charlus and to the narrator. Both choose the way of the "double female", but Charlus' choice is symbolized by Jupien, who, although he is the most "female" of all the homosexuals, remains still a man. The symbol of the mothers is completely female.

Proust, probably before he even began to conceive of his monumental work, had accepted the prevailing notions about homosexuality--especially those of Krafft-Ebing. We may accept these theories as truth for a moment--and apply them to Proust himself. In the "homme-femme" balance sheet,

we must place Proust squarely on the "femme" side. And, in making the narrator succeed while causing Charlus to fail, can we not maintain that Proust found a unity with his own being? Certain artistic creations have a "masculine" aura, others a "feminine" one. If there is a "maleness" about Michelangelo's frescoes and statues, there is a "femaleness" about A la recherche du temps perdu. Moses, David, and the Last Judgment reflect the perfect fusion of an "homme" homosexual with a "masculine" art. A la recherche, in its style and in the narrator's uniting with the eternal past by means of art is the coinciding of Proust with himself and the victory of the eternal female.

NOTES

1. Howard Moss, The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1962), p. 1.

2. Proust, III, 761.

3. Ibid., 687.

4. Ibid., 781.

5. Proust, II, 862.

6. Ibid., 863.

7. Ibid., 1033.

8. In contrast, the reader need not choose between Edouard and Olivier; in comparison with either Charlus or Morel, the lovers of Les Faux-Monnayeurs seem flat as characters, too innocuous as human beings. It is in part the deliberate sobriety of Gide's style which produces this reaction, but reflects also the fact that Proust plunged more deeply into the homosexual psyche than did Gide.

9. Proust, II, 861.

10. Ibid., 264-67.

11. Ibid., 674.

12. Ibid., 21.

13. Proust, I, 20.

14. Milton Hindus, The Proustian Vision (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1954), p. 239.

15. Proust, III, 817.

16. "Through dreams one becomes acquainted with aspects of one's own personality that for various reasons one has preferred not to look at too closely. This is what Jung called 'the realization of the shadow.' (He used the term 'shadow' for this unconscious part of the personality because it actually often appears in dreams in a personified form.)

16. (con't.) "The shadow is not the whole of the unconscious personality. It represents unknown or little-known attributes and qualities of the ego--aspects that mostly belong to the personal sphere and that could just as well be conscious. In some aspects, the shadow can also consist of collective factors that stem from a source outside the individual's personal life." M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation", in Man and His Symbols, (Carl G. Jung, ed. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 171, 174.
17. Proust, I, 164.

18. We might also see the warrior Saint-Loup's "way" as the path to a homosexual heroism à la Gide. Charlus might ride into battle against the world holding high a banner emblazoned: "Corydon Forever!" But such an interpretation, although possible for a Gide, seems improbable for Proust, the true invert and passive homosexual.

THE THEME OF THE MASK

From the moment that Odysseus returned home incognito, the mask became a major motif of Western literature. Its most persistent appearance has been in comedy, but it is the serious mask which seems more in tune with our century. The motif of disguise is today linked with questions of appearance versus reality, self-deception versus self-realization. We are led to consider the import of the everyday reality veiled by Nadja's many forms or whether Clappique will succeed in escaping the fate of his fellow Europeans in the guise of a sailor. Existentialist writers have very frequently used the mask theme to pose the question of authenticity and to explore relationships between Subject and Object.

Almost all of the disguised characters in modern fiction freely choose their costume, their second identity. The homosexual character does not--it is forced upon him. The necessity of hiding himself, of wearing a mask, is so basic to the homosexual "condition humaine" that no author who wrote of inversion disregarded it.

In uranian literature we are concerned neither with an unconscious distortion of identity (à la Emma Bovary)

nor with a willfully desired second identity (à la Tartuffe). Because of the taboo against inversion, the homosexual must wear a mask whether he wants to or not. To the world he must appear different from what he actually is. First, his physical appearance and mannerisms must not betray any femininity. For those authors who accept the "homme-femme" structure of the homosexual personality, their characters wear the mask of exaggerated virility: Charlus and Genet's "matous" come immediately to mind. Moreover, the invert must not speak of his desires; the communication link between the homosexual and the non-homosexual is therefore broken. The invert is free to be himself only with fellow inverts; the results are pathetic, whether we consider the puerile conversation between Charlus and Vaugoubert or the animosity between Divine and Mimosa. In a social context, in any contact between the homosexual and the world, the invert is, from the beginning, a being who is not free.

Let us first consider the social necessity for the mask. It is clearly the theme of Bourdet's play <u>la Prisonnière</u>, first performed in 1926, and the first major theatrical work in France to deal openly with homosexuality. It is lesbianism which is the subject, another example of

the fact that female homosexuality offers less of a taboo than male inversion and precedes it into each literary genre. The plot is quite simple: in order to remain in Paris with the woman she loves, Irène must don the heterosexual mask. She first lies to her father in telling him that she loves and wants to marry Jacques, but when the latter appears, the lie must be compounded and to him she implies that she is in love with yet another man. Jacques sees through her lie and accuses her of it, to which Irène replies:

> --Si je mens, c'est qu'on m'y force!
> JACQUES: --Qui?
> IRENE: --Tout le monde.[1]

In the first act of the play Irène thus disguises her true feelings to both her father and her only friend: the mask is worn before the world. During the second act, she will lie to herself in becoming Jacques' wife. But this disguise will not work either and the marriage fails. According to her husband, she cannot give herself to him completely. Both go their separate ways, Irène back to Madame Aiguines, her lover, and Jacques to his former mistress.

It is most interesting that Bourdet does not condemn Irène's homosexuality. A dull character in a rather lifeless play, she is none the less sympathetic. Her struggle

against a passion which she cannot ultimately conquer is a valid one. For Bourdet inversion is too strong to be vanquished either by will power or by marriage. He rejects the prevailing belief of the day that a return to traditional moral values and a marriage could "cure" the homosexual.[2] Rather was Bourdet undoubtedly influenced by Proust, not only in the title of his play, but also in the belief that homosexuality was too deeply ingrained in the personality to disappear under the marriage mask. In a similar way Saint-Loup continues to see Morel after his marriage to Gilberte.

La Prisonnière remains neutral in its attitude toward inversion. Even though the marriage fails because Irène has no real physical desire for her husband, the latter, on the other hand, is motivated by physical desire alone. It is his own mistress Françoise who accuses him:

> FRANÇOISE: Vous, aimer? Mais, mon pauvre Jacques, vous ne savez même pas ce que c'est!
> JACQUES: Vous croyez?
> FRANÇOISE: J'en suis sûre. L'amour, pour vous, c'est un jeu assez amusant. Et encore, pas toujours. Il n'y a guère qu'un moment qui vous amuse.[3]

Thus the simple fact of physical desire--or the lack of it--makes the marriage crumble. In all other respects Jacques is the ideal husband and Irène the perfect wife.

La Prisonnière does not descend into disgusting or shocking descriptions of homosexuals and homosexual behavior. Madame Aiguines' husband tells what it is like to be married to a lesbian:

> --Ce sont des ombres. Il faut les laisser se promener entre elles dans leur royaume d'ombres!... Non! Nous ne connaissons pas! Nous ne savons pas ce que c'est! C'est mystérieux...et redoutable.[4]

The lesbian is still the shadowy being she was for Baudelaire, but she is not a hideous monster. In his speech M. Aiguines does express the heterosexual man's fear of lesbianism and does underscore the power of homosexual desire. But another character perhaps best expresses Bourdet's attitude. Irène's sister Gisèle, an innocent young girl, says:

> --Je tâche de ne pas me mêler de ce qui ne me regarde pas, voilà tout.

Irène adds immediately:

> --Oui, mais c'est rare, vois-tu, les gens comme toi![5]

If the new theme of homosexual love is the core around which la Prisonnière develops, other loves are also depicted: Jacques' love, or desire, for Françoise, Irène's father's lack of affection for his children, and Irène's sincere love for her little sister. Moreover, with the clean break at the close of the play,[6] Bourdet, after

presenting each of these loves, leaves the audience to make up its own mind.

There is only one incident in la Prisonnière which distinguishes, on the outside, the homosexual woman from the heterosexual one. Françoise is exceedingly interested in fashion and in her appearance, whereas Irène cares not at all about clothes and allows her sister to choose the dresses she will wear. Might we not see here a reflection of the theme of the mask: Françoise can spend time worrying about the effect a certain gown will have at a chic soirée. Irène cannot. The choice between a "robe crêpe de Chine" and a "robe mauve" is superfluous for the lesbian who must don a more complete costume--an all-hiding mask--to appear before the heterosexual world.

Irène's heterosexual mask ultimately does not conceal her, either from others or from herself. Yet at the same time her homosexuality is not condemned and, violets in hand, she returns to the woman she loves. Another character who dons the marriage mask is Proust's Marquis de Vaugoubert. This contemporary of Charlus is the successful man who must keep his inversion hidden for fear of losing his diplomatic position. Vaugoubert is the "organization homosexual" who has chosen the disguise of marriage

and business respectability and who no longer permits himself even a passing homosexual affair. He has "...sacrifié tout plaisir".[7]

His great fear of being discovered and therefore scorned and rejected is counterbalanced by his desire to be pleasing and accepted; this confusion becomes evident in the strange double nature of his conversation. Proust compares him to a caged beast whose eyes rapidly dart in all directions looking for some means of escape. Always it is the eyes which reveal the homosexual: at the Guermantes' party where he must hold tight to his thick mask, his eyes are nevertheless like tennis balls which bounce from man to man. When he is alone with Charlus the mask is removed completely. He goes to the other extreme of behavior, adopts feminine gestures, uses feminine names for men and sees inversion everywhere. We might say that he is almost schizophrenic, so different is he with and then without his mask.

Proust writes that Vaugoubert dared not look at himself in a mirror for fear of seeing the wrinkles on his face. Yet he had, years previously, negated his own sexuality by categorically rejecting any affairs with men and also by marrying his overly-masculine wife. He is therefore not

interested in being attractive to a man. Rather does he not look in the mirror because he might see nothing. He might have no identity. Vaugoubert's two extremes cancel each other out; he is neither man nor woman. The mask he has so carefully worn has reduced him to a non-entity. The external forces have produced an inner void, and Vaugoubert, not intelligent enough to see himself as he has become, remains a pathetic individual.

For Proust the mask can never hide the homosexual completely. Usually it is the eyes, but often a gesture or a way of speaking reveals those traits which the invert tries hard to conceal. Someone outside always perceives what is inside the homosexual. In many cases it is only the intelligent and sensitive Marcel who comprehends. Yet even he is unaware of Charlus' inversion until the moment when, from his hiding place, he watches the baron in the Guermantes' courtyard. Closely linked with the motif of the mask is the aura of mystery and the themes of concealment and lying.

We first meet Charlus staring at the young Marcel at Tansonville. The eyes and his white suit are all we are allowed to see, although the narrator has observed the characteristics of the young Gilberte and even her obscene

gesture. Next to Charlus stands Odette and it is common knowledge--although quite incorrect--that Charlus is the lover of his friend Swann's wife. Thus is the baron introduced within the framework of a lie. Lying is one of the cornerstones on which the homosexual's life is built; Proust will concentrate on its tragic necessity later in the novel. Yet it is only glimpsed in the innocence of Combray and we do not see Charlus again until the adolescent days at Balbec.

But we do learn about this strange personage before his specific entrance onto the stage. His nephew Saint-Loup draws a portrait of him much as a secondary character or confidant sketches the outline of the major character in a classical tragedy. We hear of his noble ancestry and the importance he places on it, his position as the "king" of the Faubourg and its arbiter of taste. This partisan of excessive virility, a physical culturist who must have been a "lady killer" in his day, is so averse to any suggestion of inversion that he thrashed a homosexual who dared to make a pass at him. If Saint-Loup's description of Charlus as the leader of society is true, his portrait of his sexual life, we will subsequently learn, is completely false. Again the lie surrounds Charlus, becoming even more potent

because it comes from a member of his own family. We can believe Xipharès speaking of Mithridate, but we cannot believe even a relative when homosexuality is at issue, suggests Proust.

And yet there is the Proustian belief that within each lie resides an element of truth. Indeed there is truth when Saint-Loup talks of his uncle's protection and support of men of the lower classes and his admiration of virility. But Saint-Loup sees neither the true causes nor the true ends of these actions--only the superficial actions themselves. Thus may we not say that Act I of the play "le Baron de Charlus" is a false act, but one which, when the truth is later revealed, will in retrospect appear yet more tragic?

Moreover, during this "first act" we are led to see that in Charlus there is some kind of duality, some double nature as yet unclear. He is gruff and domineering, yet there is evidence of a "côté assez gentil".[8] He is a "vieux coureur de femmes" but Saint-Loup is unable to name a single woman. He has changed his title, his name. The double aspect hidden in the homosexual is subtlely drawn from the beginning.

Enter our hero himself--but without fanfare, without a name, for a second even without a body. For the narrator,

even before he sees anyone, has the feeling of being watched. It is the eyes again, emitting such a force that the young man must turn to look. The unknown gentleman becomes visible, doing nothing but staring at him and nervously striking his pants with a riding crop.[9] But the look is of primary importance and evolves from one of attention, to activity, to "une suprême oeillade à la fois hardie, prudente, rapide et profonde".[10] The adjectives reveal much. A look which is both bold and modest would be difficult for even an experienced actor to convey; the two adjectives contradict each other. But if it were possible to convey, it could be done only by a person clever enough to control his eyes completely. This the gentleman must be, for the final two adjectives, "rapide" and "profonde" describe, when placed together, a clever fellow.

Charlus the homosexual is trying to attract the young man, but, as there is no response, he adopts "un air distrait et hautin"--a defense mechanism--and begins to perform various kinds of little actions to pretend he is waiting for someone. It is an act and the narrator, while not at all comprehending the raison d'être for the eye-play, does see the sham of the man's play-acting. Again truth is not

completely perceived; it cannot be, for we are witnessing a show. (The poster toward which Charlus turns announces a performance of a play.)

Unnamed, unknown and mysteriously masked, the gentleman disappears, only to reappear an hour later. Again he is preceded by his eyes which immediately intuit the entire situation, but become nevertheless consciously neuter. And now he is named--but incorrectly. Mme de Villeparisis introduces the ubiquitous stranger as "le baron de Guermantes". Again a momentary confusion and mystery. Realizing her mistake, Mme de Villeparisis continues: "Après tout, l'erreur n'est pas si grande...tu es bien un Guermantes tout de même".[11] Even though a Charlus might also be a Guermantes, the name "Charlus"--used throughout the novel as the epithet for the homosexual and spawning the Proustian word "charlisme" --is not at all synonymous with "Guermantes". For there are two Charlus: the proud and noble leader of society and the hidden homosexual. Might we not paraphrase Proust in postulating both the "côté de Guermantes" and a "côté de Charlus"?

The mysterious double nature of Charlus coincides perfectly with the Proustian conception of the "homme-femme". Thus on the manly face of the baron we first see a light layer of powder (which also suggests an actor). Underneath the overly-virile words and actions, we glimpse--through the narrator's grandmother--"des délicatesses, une sensibilité

féminines".[12] Undoubtedly the most physically descriptive evocation of the "man-woman" is that of Charlus seated amidst the most beautiful and elegant women at Mme de Villeparisis' soirée:

> M. de Charlus fut bientôt assis à côté de Mme Swann. Dans toutes les réunions où il se trouvait, dédaigneux avec les hommes, courtisé par les femmes, il avait vite fait d'aller faire corps avec la plus élégante, de la toilette de laquelle il se sentait empanaché. La redingote ou le frac du baron le faisait ressembler à ces portraits réussis par un grand coloriste, d'un homme en noir, mais qui après de lui, sur une chaise, un manteau éclatant qu'il va revêtir pour quelque bal costumé...Derrière la barrière parfumée que lui faisait la beauté choisie, il était isolé au milieu d'un salon comme au milieu d'une salle de spectacle dans une loge...[13]

Like a painting by Manet where the black outline stands out in relief, yet is affected by the vibrant colors around it, Charlus sits as a man among women--yet he is also those women. The image becomes even stronger at the soirée "chez la Princesse de Guermantes", where Charlus is "quasi enveloppé par l'immense jupe de la comtesse Molé".[14] A man on top, a woman on bottom; the "homme-femme" is here vividly visible before our eyes.

If this mask is unconscious, there are many conscious ones that Charlus uses. In his attempts to seduce the young Marcel, he becomes now the Greek mentor, then an odalisque on a sofa. Until the beginning of Sodome et

Gomorrhe the narrator constantly wonders about this mysterious quality in the baron. The relationship between Marcel and Charlus before Sodome et Gomorrhe is primarily a homosexual one: the baron tries again and again to seduce the boy, but the latter does not understand this. Marcel is extremely anxious to be received into the "côté de Guermantes", but he bypasses consistently the one person who might give him immediate access to it--Charlus. It is never the young man who arranges their meetings. Charlus comes to the hotel room, it is he who follows Marcel out of Mme de Villeparisis' soirée and who asks him to visit him in his room. The attempted seduction of a young man by a forty-year-old invert must be done with great finesse. Because of the homosexual taboo, Charlus must perforce be even more careful than a heterosexual in the same situation. Homosexuality does change the nature of the game and will profoundly affect the narrator's vision. If the seduction had been made overtly, all the present and subsequent questioning and doubts of the narrator would not have developed. But precisely because there is mystery surrounding Charlus' actions, Marcel, wanting to understand, is forced to explore the meaning of these actions and, consequently, the nature of the man himself. Because of the haunting question mark

in the narrator's mind, he will be led into his analysis of the human soul. The uncomprehended words and actions of a homosexual--his mask--in part pave the road which the narrator will follow in his quest.

Charlus is without a doubt a superb actor. He wears his many masks with consumate skill. It is only when his passion for Morel blinds him to social exigencies that his tragedy begins. Because of his great desire to promote his lover as a musician, he forgets Mme Verdurin. She and the entire "petit noyau" had known about Charlus and Morel--the "demoiselles". But it made no difference to her as long as the two men had some other characteristic which would save them. Morel was a fine musician and Charlus a trump card in Mme Verdurin's society game. She deigned to overlook their inversion, whitewashing it in her own eyes until the moment when she herself chose to reveal it. Her attack on the baron when she realizes that she is receiving none of the glory at Morel's concert is one of the most vicious scenes in A la recherche. Her lies and innuendos succeed in turning Morel against his benefactor. Charlus's tragedy is brought about by the machinations of the "queen" of bourgeois society. From initial hypocrisy to malevolent destruction, Mme Verudrin uses the fact of

homosexuality as a weapon to defend herself. She believes she has won an important battle as Charlus lies crushed. Yet it is clear that Proust is on the side of the supposedly vanquished and Charlus is saved from complete collapse, not by any members of the little clan, but by the unexpected return of the Queen of Naples. If the bourgeois queen has destroyed, the noble queen, although unknowingly, saves.

After this climactic scene Charlus descends more and more into his inversion. The "tare" spreads out, stains his body and soul to a greater and greater degree. In the beginning was the fault, fated and inescapable. But there was also the mask. Charlus succeeds well in hiding his homosexuality; he has the "perspicacité spéciale" which Vaugoubert lacks. However, the compromises which he is forced to make because of necessity--the necessity of his inversion combined with the necessity of concealing it--eventually produce deleterious effects. Like the yellow spots of liver disease or the red blotches of skin disease, says Proust, the sickness will not stay hidden within him. The body assumes yet another appearance; the mask cannot hide the pathological yellow blotches. The baron loses control over his gestures and his physical appearance. But what is even more devastating is that his own astute perception of himself disappears. Like Saül caressing his demons, Charlus is followed everywhere by the street urchins of Paris.

It is not only his age and the "tare". The double life he has been forced to live has extracted a heavy toll. If Charlus does not choose the "way of art", it is in part because he has had to live a work of art. He had in his youth painted a fan for Oriane, but he does not become a painter of canvases because he has expended his energies painting himself.

To wear a mask well is to create oneself as a work of art. It is also to lie. For Cocteau the living of a consummate lie was energizing and beautiful;[15] for Proust it is debilitating and tragic. To the burden of fate must be added the weight of the mask. Not only does the wearing of it throughout the years drain the energies of the homosexual, it insidiously destroys his own inner being.

In discussing Stendhal's various pseudonyms and his life of masquerade, Jean Starobinski[16] shows that there can be a link between travesty and pleasure, that the mask offers a means of release and freedom. However, with Stendhal, as with Cocteau, the mask is willfully placed over one's face. For the homosexual character the mask is a prison. He has no control over it. Rather than using the mask, the invert is used by it.

NOTES

1. Edouard Bourdet, La Prisonnière, in Théâtre, Tome I bis (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1960), p. 221.

2. This was a doctor's answer to the young Gide's anxiety over his homosexuality.

3. Bourdet, 324.

4. Ibid., 273.

5. Ibid., 211.

6. It lacks the meldramatic suicides of Roger Martin du Gard's Un Taciturne and Lillian Hellman's The Children's Hour.

7. Proust, II, 642.

8. Proust, I, 750.

9. This action is a prefiguration of the scene in Jupien's brothel where Charlus is whipped by a hired boy.

10. Proust, I, 751-52.

11. Ibid., 753-54.

12. Proust, I, 762.

13. Proust, II, 267.

14. Ibid., 674.

15. See: Le Mensonge.

16. Jean Starobinski, L'Oeil vivant (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1961).

MICHEL AND THE BOYS

> ...mais chaque fois que je la rencontre, elle rit et plaisante de ce que je lui préfère l'enfant. Elle prétend que c'est lui qui surtout me retient. Peut-être a-t-elle un peu raison...[1]

"There may be some truth in what she says", concludes Michel in the understated manner to which we have become accustomed in reading l'Immoraliste. That he prefers boys to girls seems finally to be evident even to himself. It is only here, at the very end of his story, that Michel clearly admits that "les enfants"--his constant euphemism for young boys--are holding him in their grip. In spite of his constant self-analysis, never does Michel, until this final line, glimpse any homosexual desire in himself. Yet the boys parade through his tale; it is a long cortege.

The readers of l'Immoraliste at the time of its initial publication, and several critics since, see the work as totally dominated by the homosexual theme. Others minimize it, seeing Michel's interest in young boys simply as a symbolic representation of Gide's fervent desire to free the individual from all restraints. The answer lies between these two positions; if, as Gide himself writes in his preface, he has placed in this book "toute sa passion, toutes

ses larmes et tout son soin", l'Immoraliste must also stand as a study of emerging homosexuality. Gide's statement in his Journal (Nov. 26, 1915) that Michel was indeed an unconscious homosexual is almost superfluous to a careful reader.

The originality of l'Immoraliste lies in its questioning of the validity of the very words and thoughts of the first-person narrator. To accept Michel's story as he relates it we must believe that he has no overt homosexual desires. But we cannot, simply because Gide's striking achievement in this early work was to suggest, even through Michel's own words, unconscious forces which act against what the narrator actually believes and recounts to his friends. Thus there is a "double" in Michel, not an "homme-femme" as in Proust, but a single man who is consciously oblivious to any homosexual desire and at the same time a being who becomes more and more of a pederast as his story and his life evolve.

That Michel is a latent homosexual need no longer be doubted. The question still to be answered, though, is how Gide precisely used the uranian motif--here in its unconscious form--to illustrate Michel's conscious striving to become healthy, free and his own master. Much can be

learned by looking directly at each of the boys Michel encounters and by examining both them and Michel's response to them. But let us first look at Michel himself.

Michel is not born a homosexual; hereditary factors are not applicable to him as they are to Mlle Vinteuil. His parents have influenced him, but not directly in his sexual orientation. The intelligent, bookish, rich and sickly young man is sexually undefined. Attached to his scholarly father, Michel has followed in his footsteps and remained closed to the sensual world. But it is his mother's influence, not his father's, that Michel believes formed him. For Michel, as for Gide himself, it will be against a sexless Huguenot morality that the immoralist will revolt. If to most fundamentalist Protestant groups all sex is immoral,[2] this does not predispose a young Huguenot to homosexuality. Yet his attitude toward women has been affected, and Marceline will remain in many ways a replacement for the mother who died when Michel was fifteen. He has married solely to please his dying father. "Si je n'aimais pas, dis-je, ma financée, du moins n'avais-je jamais aimé d'autre femme."[3] Not that he had loved a man either: "J'aimais quelques amis...mais plutôt l'amitié qu'eux-mêmes."[4] A thoroughly mental being, love to Michel appears to be an

abstract mélange of tenderness, pity and estime, where "une sorte de galanterie froide" is substituted for feelings.

Marceline's devotion to Michel is indeed maternal. He is "protégé, secouru, veillé" by her. She is the first to be attracted to the urchins of Biskra, in a motherly, kindergarten-teacher way. Her favorites are the sickly, well-behaved boys who resemble her husband. Later when Michel and Marceline arrive at La Morinière they often sit on the bench where the young boy had sat with his mother. His wife's pregnancy is made known a week after their arrival in Normandy and it is in this setting of order, security and peace that Marceline will appear as a contented and satisfied character. When she is taken from this fruitful land, from Mother Earth, her collapse will begin; the miscarriage will take place in Paris and her illness and subsequent death in the arid and sterile desert. The Marceline-Michel relationship is thus in part a mother-son relationship. He is not conscious of this, but his words and actions betray him.

But it is not just what she is to him that is important to his awakening homosexuality, but what she is not. We know nothing of her physically, except that she is pretty, blond, but not delicate. Michel's awakening to his wife is indeed more mental than physical. Contact with her as

a female is lacking; two beds are visible on the honeymoon boat and at El Djem. It is only after his victorious fight with the drunken coachman--a scene in which he proves his "virility" in front of his wife--that they consummate their marriage. Illness or no, it has been a long wait! Then only does love burst forth:

> Ce fut cette nuit-là que je possédai Marceline. Avez-vous bien compris ou dois-je redire que j'étais comme neuf aux choses de l'amour? Peut-être est-ce à sa nouveauté que notre nuit de noces dut sa grâce. Car il me semble, à m'en souvenir aujourd'hui, que cette première nuit fut la seule, tant l'attente et la surprise de l'amour ajoutaient à la volupté de délices,--tant une seule nuit suffit au plus grand amour pour se dire, et tant mon souvenir s'obstine à me la rappeler uniquement. Ce fut un rire d'un moment, où nos âmes se confondirent. Mais je crois qu'il est un point de l'amour, unique, et que l'âme plus tard, ah! cherche en vain à dépasser; que l'effort qu'elle fait pour ressusciter son bonheur, l'use; que rien n'empêche le bonehur comme le souvenir du bonheur.[5]

The perfect, beautiful, Androgynous moment--but immediately intellectualized. Aside from vague and abstracted "volupté de délices" there is nothing at all physical about this novice's first night of love. The reader knows that Michel himself is a master of physical description--witness the landscapes and the Arab boys. We see that he cannot relate to Marceline in the same way. Moreover, Michel is quick to state that the soul will in vain try to surpass this night

of love. It is the ideal moment, but it is an end, not a beginning. The next morning he watches her sleeping and "je posai doucement entre ses yeux fermés le plus tendre, le plus amoureux et le plus pieux des baisers".[6] A kiss of white purity, as one might kiss an icon.

The rebirth of Michel to health and initiation into the sensual pleasures at Syracuse and along the Italian coast are presented with no reference at all to Marceline. She is completely absent from the ode to sensual joy which is chapter six. The untouchable mother and wife, she remains a symbol of the ethereal purity which Gide desired, a Beatrice whom Michel adores and, at the same time, against whom he must rebel. Because she loves the first Michel, she will become an obstacle to the emergence of the second Michel. She does not want change and her look will cement him into a stone being, unable to develop and be free. As the boys enter his life, Marceline shrinks further and further into the background.

The first of the boys to appear is Bachir and from Michel's description of this street urchin who is visible for only a moment, we know more about him--physically--than we learn about Marceline from the entire book. In addition to every hole and patch in each garment he wears, we see

his eyes, arms, feet, ankles, wrists, hair, and shoulder; in fact, we learn almost immediately that "il est tout nu sous sa mince gandoura blanche et sous son bornous rapiécé".[7] Michel is undressing him with his eyes. He feels the need to touch him. How different from the matter-of-fact description of Marceline's clothing onthe boat: "Sa jupe et son corsage pareils étaient faits d'un châle écossais que nous avions choisi ensemble".[8] If Marceline is often seen with a book in hand, Bachir is whittling a whistle with an old knife. Gide did not know the works of Freud in writing l'Immoraliste, but the symbolism is too potent not to be conscious.

The next day Michel is bored, upset because Bachir does not come back and almost cries when Marceline returns without him. When the boy does come again to the hotel, he cuts his thumb while carving. As Michel watches his "pink tongue" between his "white teeth" licking the wound, it is an erotic moment. Michel says that he is attracted only to Bachir's health; indeed this is so, but the homo-sexual pull is none the less evident. At the same time as all five of his senses are awakened, he is awakened to the sensuousness of a young boy.

Moreover, physical, healthy girls are present in Biskra; Bachir's sister is fleetingly introduced. If

Marceline is for Michel a non-physical being, other females need not be--but they are. The few Arab girls who appear in l'Immoraliste are very summarily dismissed.

Strong enough to go to the oases, Michel is next attracted by the shepherd boys. An avid disciple of Theocritus (even when reading no longer interests him) Michel is enchanted by these flute-playing, tree-climbing Pans. Almost every time that a new "enfant" appears, Michel describes him as "beau". As he had undressed Bachir, he notices immediately "une nudité dorée" under Lachmi's cloak as he climbs the palm tree. Assuredly physical beings, the boys are also non-Michels; the narrator is attracted to those boys who are different from himself and repelled by the school boys whom Marceline helps with their homework. The shepherds and street urchins interest him because he glimpses, unconsciously, a new image of himself. They are real manifestations of what he would like to be; Marceline's boys are what he was. Both his wife and her favorites are put aside; Michel now admits that he prefers to go to the park and oases alone.

The only boy mentioned by Michel during his first Italian trip is Athalarie, the barbarian chieftain who, in his revolt against his upbringing, his culture and his

mother, summarizes what Michel himself wishes to be. This fifteen-year-old warrior led a violent life "avec de rudes favoris de son âge".[9] But Athalaric died at eighteen, "tout gâté, soûlé de débauches", and Michel decides to take this as a lesson. That he does not is witness to the ever-increasing interest he will take in boys who lead this type of existence.

Charles Bocage is the one boy who is important as Michel begins his life at la Morinière. Health now having been achieved, Michel will turn toward applying his projected new self to a complete, harmonious life style. Charles is older than seventeen, but looks no more than fifteen; he is, of course, handsome and healthy--even his ridiculous clothes cannot hide the natural beauty of his body.

Charles is a child too: he is timid, blushes easily, and Michel will play games with him just as he did with the Arab boys. "Clearing the swamp" is the first of these games; the older man jumps into the muck when Charles does so and the two appear to be little boys as they join hands to catch the eels (the Freudian symbol is obvious), ecstatic as the mud and slime hit them in the face. It is a more constructive game than whittling or playing marbles with Bachir, but it is nevertheless a game. An older man who plays games with adolescents has often been used by

authors who wish to suggest latent homosexuality.[10] This "game-playing" cannot be overlooked here, and it will appear also in Saül and in Passavant's relationship with Vincent Molinier. Marceline cannot enter into these games; in fact, she arrives too late for "the clearing of the swamp". But Michel feels that she would have spoiled their joy anyway.

It is only Charles who can tame the unruly colt, as he will temporarily tame his employer. The two ride together day after day; it is indeed a romantic idyll which unfolds:

> ...de préférence, nous partions de grand matin, dans l'herbe claire de rosée; nous gagnions la limite des bois; des coudres ruisselants, secoués au passage, nous trempaient; l'horizon tout à coup s'ouvrait...[11]

This "affair" between Michel and Charles is lovingly painted by Gide; it is in harmony with his own beliefs about homosexual relationships. Is it only a symbol of a harmonious and healthy life? The answer must again be negative, for the result of the Michel-Charles trysts is the turning away from the heterosexuality of his marriage as he returns to Marceline later and later each day.

But reality must enter; the renewal of the leases and the bad autumn weather signal the end of the idyll. The love affair will be over when, after Paris and Ménalque, Michel returns to la Morinière. Charles is no longer a child, no longer a playmate. He has grown up. With his bowler hat, his sideburns, and desire to be accepted,

Charles wants to be an adult. Thus Michel no longer desires him. He avoids him and willfully and deliberately returns to his studies and entertaining his friends. But these two pursuits had already been rejected, and Michel needs only the appearance of Bute to lead him back onto the path he had been following since Marceline brought Bachir to his room.

The first group of Arab boys represented health; Charles was both youth and a kind of "lover". The new boys of la Morinière are different from the preceding in their sordidness and deceit. Bute, "tout pourri à l'esprit",[12] becomes Michel's guide to the mysteries of debauchery. He is a kind of Virgil leading Michel through the underworld of his own farm. It is from Bute that Michel learns about Heurtevant's sleeping with his own daughter, about the son's rape of the servant girl, and about Pierre's seduction of Heurtevant's second daughter. The Heurtevant household is a maelstrom of debauchery; Michel cannot stop himself from being drawn to it. The fifteen-year-old Heurtevant son becomes the symbol of Michel's new infatuation. We see this slender and hard adolescent only once: he is perched on a cart, bawling out an African song. But the health and beauty of the Arab boys has vanished, replaced by a lanky,

bowlegged and perhaps drunk boy who is being led by his horse.

There remains only the arrival of Alcide to consummate Michel's new "marriage" with immorality. His new boy is not even handsome:

> C'est un méchant galopin, à l'oeil vert, aux cheveux filasse, à l'expression chafouine.[13]

It is not an overt sexual act that Michel desires with Alcide; he is still unaware of himself. But he will join himself to the youth via their mutual poaching; he is attracted to "l'affreuse volupté de celui qui braconne".[14] Gone is the life-giving sunlight, for the poaching is done at night. Gone is the tranquillity of the oases, for poaching is dangerous. It is yet another game that two boys might play with each other--but it is much more nefarious than whittling whistles or catching eels. Dangerous, nocturnal and criminal, the new game is also self-corrupting in that Michel is poaching on his own land. The unconscious homosexual game-playing was ultimately benign with the Arab boys and with Charles; the swamp had to be drained, and one makes music with whistles. But the "poaching game" has not a single positive effect; it is the symbol of Michel's capture by his still-unrealized homosexual desires. It is he who is ultimately trapped, not the rabbits.

> --Avec quoi l'homme se consolera-t-il d'une déchéance? sinon avec ce qui l'a déchu?[15]

These words of Saül reflect Michel's desire to return to Africa, to the place where he first began his rebirth, where he first was attracted to boys. But he does not have Saül's persipicacity and he still does not see his own "déchéance". But it is there. His wish to "roll under the table" with the sailors and vagabonds of the port of Syracuse, his sleeping next to a group of Arabs at Kairouan bear witness to this. Childish games have become ugly realities; healthy bodies are now vermin-infested. But the magnetic attraction continues. Michel searches for the boys he had known two years previously, but only Moktir remains as handsome as before. He has kept his beauty, his mystery, his strength, and his cunning. Michel falls under his spell, deserts Marceline as she is slowly dying to follow the former stealer of scissors who has just been released from prison. Michel sleeps with Moktir's mistress as the boy watches. Besides the first night with Marceline it is the only other time in which Michel engages in a sexual act. It is heterosexual--but perverse. It is another game and a most revealing one. Two "boys" who share the same woman is an adolescent fantasy here brought to a disquieting reality. Michel subconsciously desires to possess Moktir in possessing

his woman. "Pourquoi étais-je près d'elle, sinon pour me rapprocher de lui?"[16] These words of Julien Green's Denis, consciously uttered, apply, unconsciously, to Michel.

Moreover, this climactic scene before the death of Marceline is enacted in a room with only one piece of furniture--a bed. It is the symbol of the force which has motivated Michel's every action. He believes he is free, but as he sleeps with the girl, Moktir caresses a rabbit. It is Michel who is trapped by the boy.

The latent homosexuality that motivates Michel is complex and changing and reflects Gide's own acute perception of a multiple homosexual response. It is true that all the male objects of Michel's attentions are boys, never adult men. It is not only Gide's own personal preference which dictated this, but an artistic reason as well. All the boys are fourteen or fifteen years old; it is the age of puberty, the age at which the adolescent perceives new movements in his body. It is an age of birth--of sexual birth. And this is precisely the only area in which Michel unconsciously wishes to be reborn.

The boys are nevertheless different from each other and reflect both the conflict and the self-delusion within Michel himself. Each of the first group of Arab boys has his double in one of the boys from la Morinière. Bachir

may be contrasted with Alcide: the former is the untarnished symbol of health and beauty with whom Michel plays harmless games of marbles; Alcide is ugly and from a corrupted and unhealthy family. Michel plays the ludicrous and self-destructive poaching game with him. Bachir is the first of the boys in Michel's life and one of the causes of his re-birth to health. Alcide is the last of the boys encountered at la Morinière and the cause of Michel's leaving the once-tranquil and peaceful farm.

Ashour was the guide in Africa, the boy who led Michel to the oasis and back home when he became ill; Bute is the guide in Normandy, the guide to the house of Heurtevant and to the poacher Alcide. Lossif is the flute-playing Pan who soothes Michel with his music under the life-giving sun; juxtaposed to him is Heurtevant fils who does not sing, but howls, an African song--in the rain. Lachmi is the golden boy who climbs to the top of a palm tree and brings down the sweet wine-like sap; in contrast, Pierre is simply drunk most of the time.

L'Immoraliste is the tale of the awakening of a man to the physical world, to the world of the senses. Each of the four pairs of boys represents one of the senses. Bachir and Alcide may be said to reflect sight--Bachir beautiful,

but Alcide ugly. In their roles as guides, Ashour and Bute hold out their hands: it is the sense of touch which they symbolize. With their songs, Lossif and Heurtevant fils represent hearing. Lachmi's wine from the palm tree and the wine drunk by Pierre symbolize taste. Michel is attracted to all of the eight boys, to all the sensuality they represent. He does not distinguish between the good and the bad; the reader does.

However, these eight boys are not the most important in Michel's life--Moktir and Charles are. These two are much more prominent both as characters and as objects of Michel's desires. Both "appear" three times in the novel. Charles is first seen in the positive relationship he has with Michel when the latter first goes to la Morinière. He then is rejected by Michel because of his appearance of a "bon bourgeois". He returns for the third time to admonish his employer for his foolish poaching, which in turn provokes Michel's decision to sell the farm. The two times that Charles reappears he becomes more and more "comme il faut"--first in his outward appearance, then in his sincere, but traditionally moral, desire to show his master the error of his ways. Moktir is first seen stealing the scissors, returns (in name only) when Ménalque reveals the truth of

the scissor incident to Michel, and finally is refound in Biskra to supervise Michel's sleeping with the girl. Each time he appears more immoral. Within the latent homosexual world of Michel, Charles is the moral figure, Moktir the immoral one.

If one assumes that all homosexuality is immoral, then he must consider all of Michel's boys as one entity. But one cannot, because Gide did not. He introduced various types of boys in his novel, representing different aspects ofa homosexuality which is good, and one which is bad. The Arab boys and Charles represent a positive pederasty--health and love; the farm boys and Moktir are the negative side--debauchery and self-deception. In rejecting Charles, Michel rejects not just a boy who has grown older, but a "good" homosexuality.

Thus, without Marceline, within its homosexual context alone, Michel does turn from a moral response to an immoral one. Within this framework itself Gide depicts the failure of his hero's quest: if his body has become well, his mind has become corroded by the self-deceptions of the poaching game; if he has desired self-liberation, he only becomes trapped like a rabbit.

> Si on enlevait de cette oeuvre...Marceline, en disparaîtrait d'un coup le sentiment du tragique moral.[17]

Delay's statement is not completely true. Without the presence of Marceline, Michel's descent into his own immorality would still be evident, precisely because of the changes in his latent homosexual responses. Michel's own "moral tragedy" is there without Marceline.

But it is a tragedy which is fixed within Michel himself. His self-deception and imprisonment affect himself alone. By introducing the character of Marceline, Gide added another dimension to his hero's pursuit of the Nietzschean ideal: that of the effect of one's actions on another. Without Marceline there would be no response from another character, no picture of the effects of immoralism on anyone except Michel himself. None of the boys could stand in Marceline's place, precisely because they do not respond. It is Michel's reaction to them which alone interests Gide, never their reaction to him. This particular homosexual orientation, pederasty, precludes a meaningful confrontation between two mature individuals. If Marceline stands as a woman and as an embodiment of Christian charity, even more does she stand as an Other and as a responding human being.

> ...l'auteur ne propose comme acquis ni le triomphe, ni la défaite.[18]

Gide's own statement in the Preface is reflected also in the homosexual structure of the novel. Moktir is not the final boy in Michel's story; Ali is. And Ali is not Moktir. He appears devoted to Michel, brings him food day and night. He becomes "fort irrité" when he surprises Michel sleeping with his sister. If it is jealousy, as Michel himself suspects, it is not of his sister, who he knows is an Ouled-Naïl, but of Michel. Although Michel cannot yet bring himself to admit it, the boy is jealous of him. And so Michel turns the girl out.

Ali has made a response. The only other boy who had done so was Charles, and Michel spurned him. But he accepts Ali. The new boy's response would not have been Moktir's and the fact that Michel is affected by it and acts according to it not only shows the glimmer of a final self-knowledge, but a rejection of his own theories and a step back from a total immoralism.

NOTES

1. André Gide, L'Immoraliste, in Romans (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1958), p. 472.

2. See: Jean Delay, La Jeunesse d'André Gide, 2 vol. (Paris: Gallimard, 1956-57), II, 529-31.

3. Gide, L'Immoraliste, p. 373.

4. Ibid., 374.

5. Ibid., 405.

6. Ibid., 406.

7. Ibid., 381.

8. Ibid., 375.

9. Ibid., 407.

10. This has subsequently been called the "tea and sympathy syndrome", based on the play Tea and Sympathy by Robert Anderson.

11. Gide, L'Immoraliste, P. 417.

12. Ibid., 445.

13. Ibid., 447.

14. Ibid.

15. André Gide, Saül, in Théâtre (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p. 144.

16. Julien Green, L'Autre sommeil in Vol. III of Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. 43.

17. Delay, II, 590.

18. Gide, L'Immoraliste, p. 368.

SAUL: HERO AND HOMOSEXUAL

> ...Saül, antidote des Nourritures Terrestres.[1]
>
> ...Saül, which Gide wrote almost immediately after his famous manuel d'évasion (though he did not publish it until 1902) and as an antidote to its excesses.[2]
>
> ...Saül, the antidote to the Fruits...[3]

Is Gide's Saül only an antidote? Jean Delay, Albert Guérard, and George Painter, quoted above, are only three of the critics who have taken Gide at his word; the author himself used the term "antidote".[4] The play is indeed a refutation of the principles of les Nourritures, but it is at the same time the most overtly homosexual of all the fictional works of Gide. Many critics have also found it confusing and unclear, precisely because they see it only in reference to the very luminosity and clarity of les Nourritures:

> In Saül...one cannot altogether resist the impression that the author is at times as much at a loss as his protagonist: 'Il ne sait nullement pas ce qu'il dit.' It is as if the author either yielded to some strange compulsion to say more than he knew or else fled from a knowledge that his words embodied but from which his consciousness recoiled.[5]

Certainly Gide's self-debate about authenticity and the value of sensual pleasure are not forgotten, but the play cannot be fully comprehended unless one realizes that a major homosexual dilemma is at its core. Even though Gide had had some encounters with Arab boys before 1895, it is from this date that he fully realized the inevitability and potency of his own inverted desires. Written in 1896, Saül reflects the problems with which the young Gide was grappling. Let us look carefully at the homosexuality of Saül.

It is evident that Saul is a pederast from the first act: his relationships with Saki, the queen and even the barber reveal this. The king's only companion during his sleepless nights is his young servant boy Saki. The queen draws Saul's past portrait:

> --Oh! depuis si longtemps Saül s'est retiré... Nabal! aujourd'hui mon inquiétude augmente et je te parlerai plus longuement. Nabal! Saul ne m'a jamais aimée. Il fit semblant, quand il m'eut épousée, d'incliner vers moi quelque flamme; mais ce fut une peu durable contrainte...et tu n'as pas idée, Nabal, de la froideur de ses embrassements![6]

The queen comprehends and in her own efforts to maintain her power, she has found a new boy-companion to take the place of Saki, who is too naive to be of use to her. Like

Marceline who first brings Bachir to Michel and like Pauline Molinier who asks Edouard to take her son Olivier under his wing, it is the woman who encourages the man-boy relationship. When the barber objects that Saul will not accept this new minstrel, David, the queen knowingly retorts: "Attendons qu'il l'ait vu!"[7] The fact that David is a minstrel is of no importance, and the queen realizes that Saul is not really interested in his musical abilities, but in his physical appearance.

Saul, who has dominated all others of his entourage during the first act, is not successful in ridding himself of the barber. For the latter appeals to Saul's vanity, and his ability to cover up a wrinkle or a gray hair is important to this king who still wishes to conserve his youth and handsome appearance.

Indeed the queen has been right and Saul, in meeting David for the first time, is immediately struck by his youth and beauty:

> --Allons! qu'on me l'amène. Eh! mais c'est un berger, ce conquérant! C'est vrai qu'il est tout jeune.--Ah! c'est qu'il est terriblement beau. (Ces trois phrases sont dites à voix de plus en basse.)[8]

The spontaneous and emotional response to the physical appeal of a youth is here, as it will later be in <u>l'Immoraliste</u>, the opening of the Pandora's box of homosexual

desire. But in this case, only the opening--and herein will lie the tragedy of Saul. For Saki is also a handsome youth and the only person with whom Saul has been able to find repose. But David is more: "berger" and "conquérant". He has slain Goliath before Saul meets him, thus he is already a hero. Indeed the queen says that he has become even handsomer because of his triumph. In addition, David has found favor with God--at the very moment when Saul finds he can no longer pray. David is not just a "sweet young thing" to keep around the palace, to look at, to listen to and to drink with. This role has--up to this moment--been fulfilled by Saki. David cannot be the houseboy that Saki is. Saul realizes this and thereby begins to perceive his own dilemma. More than his beauty, his strength and godliness make the young giant-killer worthy of Saul: this will bring about the basic conflict of the play.

To equate Saul's homosexuality with the hedonism of Les Nourritures and to contrast it with "moral serenity and self-discipline"[9] is to greatly oversimplify Saul's situation. To see the king's relationship with David as a static state is to see the play in completely heterosexual terms. Gide portrays major variations in homosexual feelings. To enjoy Saki was one thing, to enter into a complete

relationship with David is quite different. One might call Saul the "intelligent homosexual". His problem and conflict is not his homosexuality per se, but rather how to integrate it into his position as king and leader. Gide later wrote in a letter to André Rouveyre:

> ...ce n'est pas le fait d'être uraniste qui importe, mais bien d'avoir établi sa vie, d'abord, comme si on ne l'était pas. C'est là ce qui contraint à la dissimulation, à la ruse.[10]

Saul is not just king, but king of a religious nation. To remain king, he must reject his desire for David. Saul's temporal situation represents first the homosexual in a position of importance in the world. He will not allow himself to live a lie. But to profess one's inversion is to be rejected by society. The nameless, ordinary men who open Act II know Saul's secret and whisper it to one another; we know what they are saying because of their bursts of laughter. Later the barber will say: "D'ailleurs tout le monde s'en va quand il approche".[11] A homosexual king cannot remain on the throne. Saul realizes this himself in his disgust with his own effeminate son.

Even more terrifying for Saul (and for Gide) than the castigation of the world is the condemnation of the homosexual by religious morality, by God. Saul, a shepherd

himself in his youth, had been chosen by God, anointed by Samuel. But now God is silent:

> --Saul: Moi, je veux bien l'aimer, Dieu;--
> je l'aimais--mais il s'est écarté de moi--
> pourquoi?
> --Premier démon: Pour que nous ayons pu
> nous approcher.[12]

The demons--Saul's completely physical and lustful desires for boys--reach him at the end of the second act. He sees and speaks with them for the first time just after he has killed the queen--the first overt act instigated by his homosexuality. The queen's attempt to seduce David evoked Saul's jealousy and he murdered her in a burst of passion. With God and Saki absent, Saul slowly begins to notice and communicate with these young tempters (who are both comic and hideous, as the devils in a medieval morality play). They are the "part de Satan", pure homosexual lust, who offer to Saul the temptations of the senses: the purity of the morning air, the dewy grass, warm baths, liqueurs and finally the song of David. It is after the last of these temptations that Saul cries: "Dieu de David! Secourez-moi!"[13] But there will be no answer for the king who wants to hear David's song.

Saul's dilemma is posed; it becomes even more evident if it is contrasted with David's situation. The biblically

sacrosanct friendship between David and Jonathan has often been interpreted as a homosexual love affair. This is certainly the case in Gide's play. The scene which is found exactly in the middle of the play (III, 4) is a veritable declaration of mutual love--beyond esteem or friendship:

> Jonathan: Que tu est beau, David!--Je voudrais avec toi me promener sur la montagne. De mon sentier, tu écarterais chaque pierre; à midi, nous baignerions nos pieds las dans l'eau fraîche, puis nous nous coucherions dans les vignes. Tu chanterais. Je t'exagérerais mon amour.

And David:

> --Jonathan! Te voici plus beau dans ta blanche tunique que sous tes ornements royaux.--Je ne connaissais pas ton élégance, ni ce que la faiblesse a donné de grâce à ton corps.[14]

David will protect the weaker Jonathan; he is natural strength, Jonathan the fragile flower. If Saul is attracted to David, the latter is attracted to Jonathan. But there is one major difference: David is not the king, nor does he want to be king. When Saul asks him what he asks of God, David replies: "De ne jamais devenir roi".[15] For David there is no conflict--and he is not the hero of the play. The integration of homosexuality with leadership is is not a problem for a shepherd boy who plans to spend the rest of his life composing songs and living a bucolic life. Moreover, because he is too

innocent and young, David cannot yet foresee the condemnation of God. His love for Jonathan is pure, just as his admiration for Saul's glory is pure. The two need not be mutually exclusive for him as they must be for the older and more complex Saul.

The "love scene" between David and Jonathan is also the revelation of Saul's love. Hidden behind a curtain, the king, after his initial shock and despair, unthinkingly places himself in Jonathan's place as David's lover. David's words: "Console ta faiblesse entre mes bras..."[16] are too much for Saul to endure and "se traînant comme un fou", he reveals himself to them.

The barber is recalled after Saul's discovery. Believing that David is attracted by Jonathan's youth, Saul has his beard shaved off (and prefigures Michel in this respect). It is not an image of respectability, power or masculinity which Saul wishes to convey, but one of youth--the homosexual magnet. The king tries to appeal to the boy through his "new look". But David is revolted by the newly shaven Saul; indeed he has just composed a hymn in honor of the king's glory as a warrior. In this final scene of Act III, Saul's frustration and anguish become more and more evident. His own desired image rejected, and faced

with David's image of what a king should be, Saul finally loses control of himself, imagining he is a shepherd in the fields with David. His declaration of love cannot be stifled; it escapes and David flees. Thus Saul is unable to reconcile his pederasty and his state of warrior-king; the former has gained complete control of him, and at the end of the act, Saul is inwardly defeated.

There are yet two further means of escape from his impasse. The first is to hold on to his homosexual desires and try to transfer them from David to another boy. He chooses to make Saki a symbolic king (IV, 4), offering him his crown, then, when the boy refuses, forcing it upon his head with a sadistic thrust which reflects the force both of Saul's anguish and his need for a solution. But Saki cannot become David, and Saul's action fails ludicrously.

The final chance is represented by David's plan to save the king by himself protecting him. This would be the exact opposite of Saul's desire to make Saki king. For in agreeing to follow David, he would have to repress his desire for him--his homosexuality--and reassume his former role as king and leader of Israel. The decision is Saul's, and, in welcoming the demons into his tent, he chooses not to renounce his desires. The demons do not force themselves upon Saul; he

first opens the door for them, carries them in, warms them in his robe and gives them drink. Saul intermittently tries to pray, but by now the demons[17] have closed out God. They crowd into his tent and ridicule his actions and words just as the people of Israel had done. The two crowd scenes of the play (IV, 3 and V, 5) are echoes of each other: Saul is rejected by both the world and God.

Could Saul have found an answer? For the twenty-six-year-old Gide, is there a solution for the "articulate homosexual", the pederast who will not disown his desires but who, at the same time, must lead a meaningful existence? Through the eyes of society, the answer is indeed "no". Saul does not kill himself as in the Bible, but is killed by Johel, the former confidant of the queen, the representative of worldly power and order. Thus does society kill Saul, but at the same time it is criticized by Gide: Johel and the queen are nefarious and corrupt; the crowds who revile Saul and Jonathan are inane and stupid.

However, the major struggle of the homosexual is not with society. The shade of Samuel had said:

> ...ce ne sont pas les Philistins qui t'inquiètent et ce n'est pas cela que tu venais me demander.[18]

Saul admits to Jonathan in Act V:

> --Mon fils, comprends qu'il est des choses plus importantes pour l'âme que les victoires d'une armée...[19]

The struggle is with religious morality and ultimately, with oneself. Desire is there--it cannot be eradicated. Saul's fault is in giving in to a lustful pederasty and in refusing to act with strength once he realizes his situation. He sees himself:

> --Depuis que je me tais, mon âme se consume; comme un feu vigilant, son secret l'use jour et nuit.[20]

He acts only negatively in trying to quench the secret by murdering all the prophets in Israel. His killings of the queen and the witch of Endor (the only two female characters in the play) solve nothing. He again and again tries to deflect responsibility from himself; the crown is placed on the heads of Jonathan, then David, then Saki; finally he offers it to a demon to sit upon. Eventually all his positive strength collapses and he sees only David's:

> --Ce que j'aime surtout en lui, c'est sa force. La souplesse de ses reins est admirable! Je l'ai vu quand il descendait de la montagne; il semble toujours prêt à bondir...[21]

Jonathan sounds the battle cry for his father:

> --Cette nuit seule nous sépare de la lutte; il faut nous préparer ou dormir.[22]

Saul chooses to sleep; this is his flaw. The murder of the prophets did not give him control over the future. Suppression cannot be the answer; positive action alone is

valid. The witch of Endor had warned Saul of the failure of negative action; the shade of Samuel repeats it:

> --Oui, malheureux Saül! qui tues les voyants
> et supprimes ceux qui expliquent les songes--
> penses-tu tuer l'avenir? Voici: ton avenir s'est
> déjà mis en marche; il porte une épée dans la main.[23]

The sword of action is refused by Saul. His final answer is: "Avec quoi l'homme se consolera-t-il d'une déchéance? sinon avec ce qui l'a déchu".[24] It is ridiculed even by the demons.

Saul may be interpreted as a call to arms to homosexuals by the future author of Corydon. It is also a portrait of homosexual anguish; anguish because there is no answer in following sensuous pleasure alone, because society is hostile and because God has become silent. There is anguish also in Saul's difficult declaration to David and in the final scene between father and son:

> Saul: ...Jonathan! Je t'en supplie! Tu ne
> sais pas combien c'est difficile!
> Jon.: Difficile de quoi? --Pauvre père...
> comme vous êtes tourmenté!
> Saul: Jonathan...Tu es trop jeune pour me
> comprendre: je sens que je deviens
> très étonnant! --Ma valeur est dans
> ma complication.[25]

"Complication" because Saul wants "toute sa pureté"--both the kingship and David. If Saul were not so complicated we would lose interest in him and the play would fail. But it does not, not only because of the conflict in the central

character, but also because aspects of his personality are effectively mirrored in the other male characters. Saul stands between Jonathan--his son--and David--his successor. Jonathan and David are the two generally accepted homosexual stereotypes: the former, weak and effeminate, the latter, purposeful and masculine. In separating these characteristics in David and Jonathan, and at the same time in combining them in Saul himself, Gide has given the play greater depth. Moreover, through the character of Saul, he has caused the heterosexual spectator to see beyond the stereotypes and at least to glimpse a meaningful homosexual dilemma. Saki not only represents yet another homosexual type, that of the sincere, lovely young boy--but also, in his true and ingenuous love for Saul, makes a vivid contrast with the noxious demons.

Saul is more than an antidote. It is an opening of a whole area of literary subject matter. The ending of the play is itself an opening. Will Saul's conflict now become David's? Undoubtedly: "Il a fait retomber de tout son poids cette couronne sur ma tête".[26] Saul himself failed to integrate his homosexuality into his larger life. But he is not condemned by David, now king and chosen by God.

David orders Johel to be killed and the new king still calls Saul "l'élu de mon Seigneur". The bodies of Saul and Jonathan, the two homosexuals, are to be laid in state.

NOTES

1. Delay, II, 655.

2. Albert J. Guérard, André Gide (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 41.

3. George D. Painter, André Gide: A Critical Biography (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 35.

4. In a letter to Pastor Ferrari, March 15, 1928.

5. G. W. Ireland, André Gide: A Study of His Creative Writings (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 143.

6. Gide, Saul, Acte I, scène 6.

7. Ibid., I, 9.

8. Ibid., II, 5.

9. James C. McLaren, The Theatre of André Gide: Evolution of a Moral Philosopher (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), p. 13.

10. November 22, 1924.

11. Gide, Saul, III, 1.

12. Ibid., II, 9.

13. Ibid.,

14. Ibid., III, 4.

15. Ibid., III, 8.

16. Ibid., III, 4.

17. In Saul's eyes the demons turn into serpents. Like the eels in L'Immoraliste they are symbols of the penis, of masculinity.

18. Gide, Saul, III, 7.

19. Ibid., V, 2.

20. Ibid., III, 8.

21. Ibid., V, 3.

22. Ibid., V, 2.

23. Ibid., III, 7.

24. Ibid., V, 3.

25. Ibid.,

26. Ibid., V, 6.

THE GREEKS AND GIDE

> --Depuis votre plus tendre enfance on vous instruisit comme moi; on vous apprit à vénérer la Grèce, dont nous sommes les héritiers.
> (Gide, Corydon)
>
> --Socrate et Platon n'eussent pas aimé les jeunes gens, quel dommage pour la Grèce, quel dommage pour le monde entier!
> (Gide, Feuillets)

The highest, the most comprehensive, and the most lasting conception of homosexual love was that developed in ancient Greece. It is still the ideal to which many inverts turn and "it is the strongest item in homosexual apologetics".[1] To be able to explain one's feelings and actions by evoking a society with which few people can find any fault is comforting and therapeutic. The relationship between male lover and male beloved is considered one of the causes of the harmonious and ordered life of ancient Greece. Orestes and Pylades, Ajax and Teucer, and especially Achilles and Patroclus manifested this love on earth. But Zeus' attraction for Ganymede showed that even the king of the gods was not unaware of the beauty of a youth. The adherents of Greek love have, through the ages, called upon the most hallowed ancient authors to defend their state.

The Greek ideal is the romanticism of homosexuality. In the adulation of masculine beauty, in the importance given to physical culture and "manliness", in the military ethos and sexually-disinterested friendship, lies an untarnished ideal. In much the same manner as women dreamed of being the medieval lady idolized by her knight, so does the homosexual yearn for a beautiful ephebe with whom he can escape into a realm of pure love and perfection.

The Greeks had always been a major presence in French literature from the Renaissance rediscoveries to the Parnassians. Yet the homosexual aspect of Greek civilization was never considered until the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed even Racine, who perhaps most thoroughly comprehended the Greek spirit, gave Hippolyte his Aricie. The major force in the Greek homosexual revival was John Addington Symonds. In his A Problem in Greek Ethics, he explored Greek inversion in depth for the first time. In a praiseworthy attempt both to understand and to alleviate the fears of parents about inversion in their children, he used the Greek example to show that this phenomenon was both "human" and "universal". He stressed the positive attributes of masculine strength--both of body and character--and the mentor-pupil relationship.

Underlining the value of the friendships developed between men, Symonds condemned, with Herodotus, all effeminancy in men.

Let us consider the characteristics of this most idealistic view of inverted love. An older and wiser man serves as the spiritual mentor of a youth who himself is not only young, but beautiful and intelligent:

> For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow.[2]

The ephebe is as yet unformed and is able to be molded. The attraction between the two males is a natural one and the relationship itself primarily a moral one. Gide combines these two aspects in a single paragraph from his Feuillets:

> Que de telles amours puissent naître, de telles associations se former, il ne me suffit point de dire que cela est naturel; je maintiens que cela est bon...[3]

Moreover, in the context of the Symposium, women are negligible and the role of the family, especially that of the father, is minimized, since the lover stands "in loco patris". The ultimate goal is the recreation of the whole man, the primeval complete individual. Through love and mutual devotion constantly pursued, a life of harmony leads to complete and eternal union.

The young Gide knew Greek literature intimately; he also knew the works of Symonds. After struggling with and arguing the Greek position in Corydon, he chose to portray Greek love in a contemporary setting in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. If the ancient myths could embody new ideas (e.g., Oedipe), so could ancient ideas be reflected in modern dress. The use and reinterpretation of the Greek myths has been a primary concern of many French writers of this century. But if Cocteau, Giraudoux, Camus, Anouilh, and Sartre have each refashioned specific Greek legends, only Gide sought to consider the homosexual concepts basic to that society's ethos.

Gide writes in his Journal that it was for Marc Allégret,

> ...pour lui, pour conquérir son attention, son estime, que j'écrivis les Faux-Monnayeurs, de même que, tous mes livres précédents, c'était sous l'influence de Em. ou dans le vain espoir de la convaincre.[4]

His wife did not serve as his Muse this time and the major interpersonal relationship at the center of Les Faux-Monnayeurs is that between Edouard and Olivier. Gide not only depicted the traits of Greek love mentioned above, but deepened the importance of them by juxtaposing them with other relationships in the novel..

Edouard's credentials are in perfect form before he actually appears in the novel. Olivier says that he is "quelqu'un de très bien",[5] a writer who has published (Plato's poet), and a man to whom Olivier can talk about anything--especially about matters in which his parents show no interest. Edouard has already perceptively appraised his nephew's poetry. And this man in his late thirties is attracted to Olivier from the start: "...je sentais qu'il me regardait constamment..."[6]

As a contrast to Edouard, Gide poses Robert de Passavant, a successful but superficial novelist who represents the corruptor, rather than the sympathetic mentor, of the young boys. "For every alleged Socratic mentor, there was an amatory cynic sweet-talking eleven-year-olds at the gymnasium."[7] Constantly profferring cigarettes, wine and money to the boys he meets, Passavant is the homosexual detested by adherents of the Greek cult. His wit is flashy but trite; his rechristening Olivier "Olive" an example of homosexual pettiness. He gains influence over the youths primarily by offering them the editorship of his literary revue, whereas Edouard must rely on his own honesty and integrity to succeed.

Olivier's beauty is underlined several times in the novel. Not only is he specifically likened to Adonis, his body is also made to reflect an unadorned and tender

soul. We first meet him blushing--a mark of innocence--and he is one of the youngest of his group. On the contrary, Bernard is nowhere described physically, and the many other boys who people the novel have some physical or psychological characteristic which make of them less than the Greek ideal.

It is important that Olivier be intelligent also--and he is. The educational atmosphere in which Greek love flourished is transposed by Gide into the boys' preparations for the baccalauréat examination and in the scene in the Luxembourg Gardens--a kind of present-day gymnasium where students congregate. In contrast to these "Greek" settings, the pension Vedel-Azaïs--the Christian world--is characterized by hypocrisy and deceit. It is there that the young boys are corrupted by Strouvilhou and where the young and pure Boris tragically dies. It is there where the physically heterosexual scenes take place: the first, in which the boys, drunk, kiss and fondle the girls, provoking Edouard's repulsion and anger; the second, in which Bernard sleeps with Sarah, aided by the demonic Armand. The latter, although one of Olivier's friends and peers, has been thoroughly perverted by the hypocritical Christian piety of his father. He stands in opposition to the Greek

figure of Olivier and it is no surprise that he eventually replaces his friend as the director of Passavant's magazine.

Olivier is like a fallow field. He needs someone to cultivate him, in striking contrast to Bernard who is, from the opening scene in which he leaves his home, eminently self-sufficient. Indeed Bernard is too independent to fit into the Greek mold: "...Bernard avait horreur des recommendations, des conseils..."[8]

The attraction between Edouard and Olivier is immediate and spontaneous--and natural. Gide had emphasized in Corydon the persistance of homosexual desires in spite of society's efforts to "heterosexualize" everyone. In Les Faux-Monnayeurs both mentor and pupil are unable to control their actions when in the presence of one another; the word "gêne" appears again and again. Olivier's elaborate plans to meet his uncle at the railroad station and Edouard's worry whether his nephew will be there are just two of the many instances in which their natural desire for each other is seen. In contrast, Olivier's sleeping with Dhurmer's girl friend--a heterosexual "natural" desire--results in disgust.

Before bringing the valid Greek relationship, the Edouard-Olivier one, to fruition, Gide first presents two

man-boy liaisons which are ultimately sterile. They both take place simultaneously, in the second part of the novel. Edouard's attempt to mold Bernard as his secretary does not succeed. Although the latter does mature and develops a greater understanding of himself, it is as a reaction against Edouard rather than because of him:

> Bernard me paraît être de cette sorte d'esprits qui trouvent dans l'opposition leur assurance.[9]

While Edouard and Bernard struggle at Saas-Fée, Olivier is with Passavant at Vizzavone. Indeed Olivier changes also as a result of the older man's mentorship, but it is only superficially, represented by his new concern for elegant clothes and sun-bathing. Thus the influence of Edouard on Bernard is more beneficial than Passavant's on Olivier, but neither approaches the Greek ideal.

Moreover, not only was the older man to inspire the younger, but vice-versa. Gide writes in Feuillets:

> ...chacun des deux y trouve exaltation, protection, défi, et je doute si c'est pour le plus jeune ou pour l'aîné qu'elles sont le plus profitables.[10]

Edouard is unable to write at Saas-Fée with Bernard, and finds his inspiration again only when Olivier is with him. It is not simply his former inspiration, but a new, more natural and flowing one, in which Gide himself delighted.

Edouard notes in his diary:

> Les livres que j'ai écrits jusqu'à présent me paraissent comparables à ces bassins des jardins publics, d'un contour précis, parfait peut-être, mais où l'eau captive est sans vie. A présent, je la veux laisser couler selon sa pente, tantôt rapide et tantôt lente, en des lacis que je me refuse à prévoir.[11]

The many women of Les Faux-Monnayeurs have little positive effect on either Edouard or Olivier. The girl with whom Olivier sleeps is stupid and nauseates him. In his diary, Edouard attaches much importance to his relationship with Laura; she serves as a kind of Muse to him--or so he would like to believe. Yet he remains artistically impotent with her and returns to the writing of his novel only when Olivier's presence regenerates him. In contrast, Bernard--the non-homosexual, the non-Greek--does change primarily because of his contact with two women: Laura, whom he idolizes, and Sarah, with whom he sleeps. But the strongest effect of a woman upon a man in the novel is that of Lady Griffith on Vincent Molinier. She succeeds in corrupting him even more than Passavant himself could have done. It is interesting to note Gide's strong statement from Corydon concerning the differences between the effects of a man versus a woman lover on an adolescent:

> ...je pense que rien ne peut se présenter pour lui de meilleur, de préférable qu'un amant.

> Que cet amant, jalousement, l'entoure, le surveille, et lui-même exalté, purifié par cet amour, le guide vers ces radieux sommets que l'on n'atteint point sans l'amour. Que si tout au contraire cet adolescent tombe entre les mains d'une femme, cela peut lui être funeste; hélas! on n'a que trop d'exemples de cela.[12]

Gide's hatred of the family as stultifying was basic to his themes of freedom and "disponibilité". The famous cry: "Familles, je vous hais!", was uttered many years before he began to write Les Faux-Monnayeurs. Yet this theme coincides perfectly with the Greek homosexual situation, in which the mentor became even more important than the natural father. Phaedrus says in the Symposium:

> --And I say that a lover who is detected in doing any dishonourable act, or submitting through cowardice when any dishonour is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father...[13]

In Les Faux-Monnayeurs it is not surprising that there is no scene between Bernard and Monsieur Profitendieu, since the boy has chosen to reject his father. Yet there is also no scene between Olivier and Oscar Molinier, no confrontation at all between son and father. With his first mention of Edouard to Bernard, Olivier had already negated his own father.

Moreover, there is discord in all the households: falsehoods between husbands and wives, no understanding

or even communication between parents and children. Indeed the most positive relationship between an adult and an adolescent in the entire novel is that between Edouard and Olivier.

Before discussing the final characteristic of Greek love--its ultimate goal and Gide's opinion of it--let us pursue the Edouard-Olivier alliance to its ultimate meaning while considering other stylistic aspects which add to the classical Greek flavor of the novel.

Nowhere in Gide's writings do we find physical homosexual acts graphically described. Although exceedingly sensitive to the sensual (witness les Nourritures Terrestres), Gide's own upbringing combined with his search for a classical harmony in his art, precluded any overt description of a situation which would inordinately shock his reader. This absence reflects not just the times, but the nature of the man himself. But even the physicality important to the awakening of Michel in L'Immoraliste has disappeared completely in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. The physicality is not at all necessary--in keeping with the highest Greek ideals. If Edouard and Olivier do sleep together, it is alluded to only by the fact that Olivier gets up from Edouard's bed supposedly to rest on the sofa. Gide also

places the Bernard-Sarah tryst directly in between the banquet scene and Olivier's attempt at suicide.

It is at the banquet where the Edouard-Olivier affair does reach its climax. The fact that Plato's Symposium is commonly called Le Banquet in French is yet another Greek reference with which Gide plays. Edouard arrives late, as did Socrates. Passavant's new novel is compared to a new Iliad (i.e., the Achilles-Patroclus liaison). The mad drunken antics of Jarry recall the revellers who enter and eventually spoil the Greek banquet. It is Jarry's baiting of Bercail which causes Dhurmer to say that Olivier is as chicken-hearted as a woman--a most terrible insult to a "Greek". This in turn leads to Olivier's burst of anger and collapse and finally to his plea to Edouard: "Emmène-moi".

The constant misunderstandings and game-playing between Olivier and Edouard vanish with these words. It is the first time the youth speaks to his uncle in the familiar form of address and the first time he openly solicits his aid. Then follows their night together and Olivier's attempted suicide because of an excess of joy. This action reflects Olivier's ecstasy in love, a modern Dionysian revel. But this annihilation of the self through

ecstasy is neither Edouardian, Gidean, nor Greek--at least in its homosexual context.

> - Nul peuple n'eut plus le sens et l'intelligence de l'harmonie que le peuple grec. Harmonie de l'individu, et des moeurs, et de la cité. Et c'est par besoin d'harmonie (intelligence autant qu'instinct) qu'ils donnèrent droit de cité à l'uranisme.[14]

It is the word "harmonie" which is central to the Greek concept of homosexual love; it is the road of Apollo, not the path of Dionysius, which is followed. The goal of the relationship between two males was the unity of two beings --a slow and loving ascension rather than a burst of instant bliss. The Achilles-Patroclus friendship typifies the Socratic position more than does a Bacchanalian orgy. We see this clearly in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. Edouard had reacted vigourously against the drunken love-play in Armand's room and against the wildness of Passavant's banquet. They terrify him in much the same way as von Aschenbach's dream of primitive jungle revelries terrifies this other lover of the Apollonian ideal. Edouard's "Greek" notions are those of order and sobriety--as were Gide's.

Thus does Olivier's attempt at the Dionysian response fail, but Edouard's way appears to work. His inspiration returns, his devotion to the convalescing youth enables him to write better than ever. He notes in his diary: "Exaltation

calme et lucide".[15] Exaltation first, but the domination of it is even more important for the classicist and for the Greek lover.

And so the Edouard-Olivier liaison is brought to a close. A mutually beneficial love-relationship bore fruit. If the novel had ended at this moment, we would have to consider it as the most complete--and the only--panegyric of Greek love in twentieth-century French literature and Gide as the great defender of this specific homosexual cause. But the novel continues--without any further scenes between Olivier and Edouard--and, as in L'Immoraliste, the final sentence sets the entire structure revolving again:

--Je suis bien curieux de connaître Caloub.[16]

The phrase not only reflects Gide's wish that one be always "disponible" and Edouard's own comment in his diary: "'Pourrait être continué...'"[17], it destroys at the same time the Greek homosexual ideal. In Edouard's wanting to meet the young Caloub, Gide suggests that his hero is already reaching beyond his relationship with Olivier.

Who is Caloub? He appears very briefly in the second chapter of the novel with a Latin book in his hand, asking

his father to help him with an exercise. The eager student is rebuffed by the father, who says:

> --Tu prends l'habitude de te faire aider et de te reposer sur les autres au lieu de donner un effort personnel.[18]

Caloub--the young scholar who is rejected by his father in his search for a mentor--is ripe for Edouard.

The staunch adherents of Greek love saw the love relationship as unending and as persisting beyond death. Pausanius says in the Symposium:

> And in choosing young men to be their companions, they mean to be faithful to them, and pass their whole life in company with them, not...to run away from one to another of them.[19]

And he reiterates that "...a hasty attachment is held to be dishonourable..."[20] It is here that Gide breaks with the Greek tradition. This union "'til death do us finally unite" would have stultified him, and so Edouard will continue to search for other young boys to guide.

Why does Gide reject the final characteristic of Greek love--its goal of the union of two male souls into the single and complete being? Pauline Molinier had said to Edouard, in the full realization of the latter's love for her son:

> --C'est Olivier qui vous fera meilleur. Que n'obtient-on pas de soi, par amour?[21]

And the author himself writes:

> C'est Olivier qu'aimait Edouard. Avec quel soin celui-ci ne l'eût-il pas mûri? Avec quel amoureux respect ne l'eût-il pas guidé, soutenu, porté jusqu'à lui-même?[22]

Ultimately it is the individual self which is important for Gide, not the uniting of two beings. Love is a means, a form of spiritual exercise, not an end. It was certainly so for the Greeks as well, a means to developing a fine moral character, a means to the perception of pure beauty and hence pure truth. But it was two men working as, and eventually becoming, one which was essential to the Socratic lovers, to Symonds and to the subsequent apologists. The self was eventually to disappear. With Gide it stands firm.

Did he change his conception of Greek love later in life? In Thésée, his last work of fiction, Gide returned to the Greeks and this time evoked the homosexual atmosphere in a humorous, tongue-in-cheek manner. Inversion was never called by its own name in Les Faux-Monnayeurs; it is in Thésée. Pirithous explains the custom in Crete:

> Sache que Minos et Rhadamante, ces deux très sages législateurs, ont réglementé les moeurs de l'île, et particulièrement la pédérastie, à laquelle tu n'ignores pas que les Crétois sont fort enclins, comme il appert de leur culture. C'est au point que tout adolescent

> prend honte et tient à déshonneur ce mépris;
> car l'on pense communément, s'il est beau,
> qu'alors quelque vice d'esprit ou de coeur
> en est cause.[23]

It is a society in which the author of Corydon would have delighted. The heterosexual world has been overturned--openly and completely. In Crete it is the boy without a male lover who is ashamed and dishonored. The homosexual atmosphere of Crete, where the greatest part of Thésée takes place, is suggested even before Pirithous' remarks:

> Les hommes, presque uniformément bruns
> de peau, portaient aux mains, aux poignets,
> au cou, presque autant de bagues, de bracelets
> et de colliers que les femmes...[24]

If the men resemble women, the women are like men. They are the ones who dominate, and not one is sympathetically treated. Pasiphaë, "au regard...bovin"[25] leads Thésée to her room and

> ...tout en protestant qu'elle ne s'adressait qu'à mon âme ou à je ne sais quoi d'intérieur,
> elle ne laissait pas de porter ses mains à mon
> front, puis, les insinuant sous mon justaucorps
> de cuir, elle palpait mes pectoraux comme afin
> de se persuader de la réalité de ma présence.[26]

She pleads the cause of her son the Minotaur only to preserve order and to vindicate her own actions. Her daughters resemble her: Phèdre is hypocritical, Ariane quite simply a nymphomaniac. She is the symbol of the woman who believes

herself to be the only absolute in a man's life. She tries to control Thésée from their first meeting, wants to hold the string which will bring him out of the labyrinth. Our hero is filled with joy when he leaves her on Naxos. There are no Marcelines, no Alissas in Thésée. The only woman whom Thésée describes in completely positive terms is Antiope. But part of this positive picture is that "ses muscles étaient fermes et drus autant que ceux de nos athlètes".[27] She has only one breast.

Dominant women and dominated men people Crete. Minos himself is arrayed in magnificent jewels and feathers; the future judge of the underworld is nevertheless duped by his wife and his two daughters. It is a society actually unlike that of the ancient Greeks, where women were subservient and men exceedingly virile. If it is a homosexual world, it is not a Greek one. The entire work is Thésée's reflection on his own life, and Thésée is Gide. The society of Crete represents the ideas of Corydon transposed into reality. Yet it is all too humorous to be taken seriously. Perhaps this Cretan world would be actually what would happen if the Corydons had their way. It would indeed be an ironic twist for the liberated homosexual to become not like a Greek god, but rather a bejeweled and duped

puppet of modern Pasiphaës and Arianes. Yet let us not make too much of this; Gide does not. Like his hero, Gide looks at the society of Crete with a subtly knowing eye and a smile at the corner of his mouth.

At the center of Crete and at the center of the labyrinth is the Minotaur himself--but he is not the hideous and ferocious child-eating monster of legend:

> --Ma main, frôlant le mur, rencontra la poignée d'une porte, que j'ouvris à un flot de lumière. J'étais entré dans un jardin. En face de moi, sur un parterre fleuri de renoncules, d'adonides, de tulipes, de jonquilles et d'oeillets, en une pose nonchalante, je vis le Minotaure couché. Par chance, il dormait. J'aurais dû me hâter et profiter de son sommeil, mais ceci m'arrêtait et retenait mon bras: le monstre était beau. Comme il advient pour les centaures, une harmonie certaine conjuguait en lui l'homme et la bête. De plus, il était jeune, et sa jeunesse ajoutait je ne sais quelle charmante grâce à sa beauté; armes, contre moi, plus fortes que la force et devant lesquelles je devais faire appel à tout ce dont je pouvais disposer d'énergie. Car on ne lutte jamais mieux qu'avec le renfort de la haine; et je ne pouvais le hair. Je restai même à le contempler quelque temps.[28]

All is there: the bright light, the magnificent flowers, the perfection of the adolescent in his youth, beauty and harmony. Here is Michel in front of the Arab boys, Saül when he first sees David, every Greek pederast before the sublime perfection of the ephebe. The Minotaur is the reason

for Thésée's voyage and the defining characteristic of Crete itself.

> Mais il ouvrit un oeil. Je vis alors qu'il était stupide et compris que je devais y aller...[29]

The "mais" is a strong one and the Minotaur is immediately dismissed: his beauty and youth are destroyed by his stupidity, the Greek ideal falls, and Thésée does not succomb.

Thésée succeeds throughout his story because he is never the dupe of anyone. He is always the master of his actions, from his deliberate forgetfulness in causing his father's death through his ultimate confrontation with Oedipus. For Thésée-Gide, complacently contemplating his successes at the end of a long life, the "moi" remains supreme. Neither in Les Faux-Monnayeurs nor in Thésée does the importance of self-development and complete freedom coincide entirely with the Greek homosexual ideal of two souls developing together.

Let us consider Proust's appraisal of the Hellenic mentor-ephebe relationship. In one scene in le Côté de Guermantes Charlus, in his continuing attempt to evoke a response from the young narrator, dons another of his many masks--that of the Greek mentor. The baron has learned that he is dealing with a young intellectual and will there-

fore try to seduce him with his knowledge and wisdom. He emphasizes the great experience he has of life--an "héritage moral"[30]--which, if Marcel follows certain demands, he will magnanimously impart to him. He will explain to him the unknown meaning of both the future and the past! (Charlus as madeleine!) He will care for him as he would a growing plant. Of course, all will be done "sur le caractère purement désintéressé et charitable".[31]

How this approach would have pleased those homosexuals who held to the Greek ideal! Indeed Charlus prefaces his offer with Diogenes' dictum to cultivate men. Is this concern to protect, educate and develop the young man so lacking in ulterior motive, as the similar attitude of Edouard for Olivier? Is this scene a Proustian plea for the beauty of Greek love? Quite the contrary, it is a vicious attack on the idealistic Corydons, for Proust shows Charlus' actions as belying his words. While speaking so altruisticly, the baron pursues every coach and coachman with his eyes. At one moment he verbally attacks the Jews and wishes to see Bloch hitting his mother. When he perceives Monsieur d'Argencourt coming toward them, he breaks away from Marcel and informs d'Argencourt that the young man is a great intimate of the whole Guermantes' clan: it

is a lie, but necessary for Charlus to save face. He also puts one major condition on his patronage: the young man must not frequent society but must visit his mentor each and every day. Of course he may have mistresses, says Charlus in stroking Marcel's chin. And finally the baron disappears in a covered carriage with a drunken driver.

The entire scene is a strong refutation of the Greek ideal, for all that concerns Charlus is to bring the narrator into the uranian fold; he drops provocative hints about a world-wide free-masonry which includes four sovereigns. Proust will write in la Prisonnière:

> M. de Charlus lui-même ne l'eût pas compris, lui qui confondait sa manie avec l'amitié, qui ne lui ressemble en rien, et les athlètes de Praxitèle avec de dociles boxeurs. Il ne voulait pas voir que depuis dix-neuf cents ans ('un courtisan dévot sous un prince dévot eût été athée sous un prince athée', a dit La Bruyère), toute l'homosexualité de coutume--celle des jeunes gens de Platon comme des bergers de Virgile--a disparu, que seule surnage et multiplie l'involontaire, la nerveuse, celle qu'on cache aux autres et qu'on travestit à soi-même.[32]

To Proust Greek homosexual love is a ridiculous fantasy and he portrays it in this street scene between Charlus and Marcel. Each incident refutes the dream in a different way. Homosexuality is not something which one controls (Charlus' eyes flit everywhere); it is tinged with vulgarity (the coachman) and sadism (Bloch and his mother); it wants

not to give of itself freely and without ulterior design, but, like all love, to possess ("you must not socialize"). Moreover, it must be hidden and lived as a lie (the meeting with M. d'Argencourt). Charlus proclaims:

> --Je serai juge et entends rester maître de l'heure. Actuellement vous êtes catéchumène.[33]

But how far from Socrates and Plato! And as the baron had begun his conversation by evoking Diogenes, he concludes it by evoking Hercules: unfortunately Marcel does not have this hero's muscular build! Greek love has lost its beautiful form.

Thus does Proust briefly consider and quickly reject the homosexual romantic ideal. It is not surprising. In the first place, Proust himself was not a pederast, had little interest in adolescents, which is the cornerstone of the entire Greek edifice. Secondly, the "homme-femme" concept would have been anathema to the Platonists. Each half of the male primeval creature was completely male and searched for his missing half in another being which was also entirely male.[34]

Proust's quick and scathing look at Greek love and its summary dismissal make Gide's conceptions appear, in contrast, to reach the heights of those of Anacreon.

Indeed Gide did find much satisfaction in the idyll of man-boy love. But it was not an absolute. Seriously portrayed in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, humorously in Thésée, Greek love missed apotheosis because Gide placed the development of the self ahead of the union of two souls. The call to "passez outre" was addressed to the single individual alone.

NOTES

1. Arno Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), p. 12.

2. Plato, Symposium, in The Dialogues of Plato, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1920), vol. I, p. 309.

3. André Gide, Journal: 1889-1939 (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1951), p. 672.

4. Ibid., 881.

5. André Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, in Romans (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1958), p. 957.

6. Ibid.

7. Karlen, 35.

8. Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, 1095.

9. Ibid., 1078.

10. Gide, Journal: 1889-1939, 672.

11. Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, 1200.

12. Gide, Corydon, 137.

13. Plato, 307.

14. Gide, Journal: 1889-1939, 996.

15. Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, 1200.

16. Ibid., 1248.

17. Ibid., 1201.

18. Ibid., 946.

19. Plato, 309-10.

20. Ibid., 311.

21. Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, 1187. Emphasis mine.

22. Ibid., 1110. Emphasis mine.

23. André Gide, Thésée, in Romans (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1951), p. 1441.

24. Ibid., 1422.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 1426.

27. Ibid., 1418.

28. Ibid., 1439.

29. Ibid.

30. Proust, II, 291.

31. Ibid., 286.

32. Proust, III, 205.

33. Proust, II, 293.

34. Plato, 317.

JULIEN GREEN AND THE THEME OF THE DOUBLE

> --Sur le lit reposaient deux corps nus...Je regardai plus attentivement les deux corps: j'étais l'un et j'étais l'autre.
> (Julien Green, L'Autre Sommeil)

> --Suppose Hephaestus, with his instruments, to come to the pair who are lying side by side and say to them, 'What do you people want of one another?'
> (Plato, Symposium)

The answer which the heroes of Julien Green would give to the question above would be that very one stated by Aristophanes in the Symposium: "...this meeting and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two..."[1]

The heterosexual man attempts to complete himself in union with a woman; from the very outset of his quest he desires someone who is different from himself. The narcissist--at the other end of the spectrum--yearns for an exact replica of himself. The homosexual finds himself in between these two positions. The object of his search is more similar to himself than is the female for the heterosexual, yet the object is not simply a mirror image, as is the case with the narcissist. Moreover, within the homosexual framework, the object of desire or love may vary to an even

greater extent than within the two other situations. Julien Green will make use of this intermediary and variable position to a far greater extent than the other writers we are considering.

For Proust, as we have seen, the man-woman syndrome influenced his entire homosexual world. Charlus desired in Morel what he felt he lacked within himself--especially his virility and his youth. Gide's homosexual heroes look for that which they feel is absent in their own natures; they wish to complete themselves by appropriating, through another being, qualities alien to their own self-image. There is nowhere a desire to find one's exact double in either Proust or Gide. David is a younger Saül, but age precludes any possibility of a mirror image. Michel would perhaps like to see himself as Moktir or Charles, but it would be ludicrous to pretend that he ever could. If assumed degrees of femininity and masculinity rule out the search for a homosexual double in Proust, age differences and basic life styles eliminate mirror images in Gide. Indeed the latter often prefers a father-son or mentor-pupil pairing (Saül-David, Edouard-Olivier). If this theme reflects the "re-creating' of oneself in another, it is far removed from a homosexual doubling.

The Genet of Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs and Miracle de la rose follows the path of his predecessors. The Divine-Mignon relationship is based on the standard--though inverted--heterosexual conception that one partner is different from the other. The Genet of Fontevrault and Mettray looks for strong male figures to counterbalance the femininity he sees too clearly within himself. If he sometimes changes his role in the Journal du voleur and plays the "masculine" part, it is still with the belief that the lover is different from himself.

With Julien Green, however, differences are replaced by similarities and the search for a homosexual partner becomes the search for a double of oneself. When Ian Wiczewski, in Sud, first meets Erik MacClure, he sees another figure standing in the shadows behind the young Southerner. As he subsequently explains to his host Edouard Broderick: "L'homme était de ma taille et vêtu comme je le suis".[2] Denis, the hero of L'Autre Sommeil, he who had seen his doubled self in a dream, attempts to unite with his cousin Claude by means of his shadow:

> --Je m'agenouillai sans bruit près de lui et le regardai; puis en me penchant un peu, je fis passer mon ombre sur ses joues et sur sa bouche, et cette espèce d'attouchment mystérieux me parut plus étrange que tout ce que j'avais pu rêver.[3]

From the dream in which he saw his own body lying next to itself to this reality in which he tries to unite with the sleeping man whom he loves, Denis is searching for an identical self outside his own being.

The mysterious homosexuality which confronts the heroes of Julien Green is very different from that which Proust depicted. There is not the slightest hint of a man-woman figure in Green's works. Nor is there the desire for young and healthy adolescents which Gide's heroes needed. For Green, if one man desires another, it is not because he sees in another what he himself lacks, but because he is totally alone and the solitude is horrifying. He wishes to find a replica of himself in the world outside of himself and to unite with this other man in order to be less alone.

Denis' childhood had been spent in a solitude which makes Gide's appear to have been a social whirl.[4] Unable to communicate with either of his parents, having no friends, he falls more and more into a world where dreams alone have meaning. (In this respect he prefigures Divine.) In a similar way Ian Wiczewski is alone, unable to relate to his "father" Edouard Broderick, his "alter-ego" Regina, or to the South itself. "Vous, vous êtes d'ailleurs",[5]

Regina says to him, and this is echoed by almost all the other characters in the play. Ian finally admits: "...je suis seul. Je me sens affreusement seul".[6]

The solitude of man is one of the basic conditions of Green's world. His characters are all "solitaires": Elisabeth is orphaned at the very beginning of Minuit; Joseph Day's famous red hair singles him out from his peers. One is not only alone, one is different, not like other people. However, as a kind of defensive reflex, the solitary character believes he is happy in his loneliness. But this solitude betrays itself. It is not an important step in the road to freedom which Genet will set as a goal. Rather it is a prison.

Denis' initial protestations of delight in being alone eventually crumble. He reaches out toward another individual--his cousin Claude. The latter had been raised by Denis' parents because his own parents had died. But it is only after the deaths of both his own father and mother that Denis finds his cousin again--both are now orphans.

Denis has already kissed a photograph of his cousin. He has thus admitted his homosexuality to himself. He has also realized that his previous attraction to the girl

Andrée was only a means of becoming closer to her friend Remy. Another dream picture presents itself to him, and again it is of two bodies lying together: those of Remy and Andrée --the heterosexual couple:

> ...je vis l'enlacement de deux corps ennemis, la terreur mêlée à la joie! Presque aussitôt la nuit se referma sur moi.[7]

The night and darkness pervade the novels of Green, representing the individual soul in his loneliness, suffering and anguish. When Denis does meet Andrée alone, he finally puts his mouth to hers--not in a gesture of love, but to stifle her words. The contact with a woman produces the same result as the dream image: "...une nuit soudaine allait se refermer sur moi".[8] By means of both the dream and the real situation, Green suggests that a heterosexual union only draws the subject further into the "night", into his solitude.

And so Denis turns to Claude. The final scene in which he superimposes his own shadow on his cousin's face takes place in the sunlight. Denis feels that he is no longer alone when he is with Claude in the bucolic setting of Chanteloup:

> Pour la première fois depuis que j'étais au monde, j'avais l'impression de n'être plus seul.[9]

Yet this moment is all too brief. The moment of sunshine, of the light which overcomes the darkness of solitude, lasts but a split-second. If Claude's face is likened to "un masque d'or",[10] Denis' "union" with it is through a shadow. It is the symbol that the doubling will not work. Claude is still sleeping in the sunshine when Denis leaves him, and even this sunlight is the harbinger of death:

> ...cette voix...qui me prédisait dans la lumière d'un jour d'été la fin de toute vie.[11]

Thus does the attempt to escape his solitude through a homosexual doubling fail for Denis. The dream image of his doubled self in the bed filled him with great joy. In L'Autre Sommeil each of the major characters is seen lying down. The corpses of Denis' father and then of his mother are described at length and grotesquely. Denis has imagined the coupling of Remy and Andrée. But the beautiful sleeping body of the young Claude is the desired one, the one which returns at the end of the novel. Denis never does lie next to his cousin and the dream of two selves lying side by side becomes the reality of his lying alone--in death:

> Pour la première fois, je pensai à ma mort comme à une chose réelle et certaine.[12]

A real and certain death is also the end for Ian Wiczewski in his similar attempt to touch another man, to

find his double, but thereby to reveal the homosexuality which torments him. Green informs us in his Avant-Propos:

> J'ai écrit cette pièce en réaction contre une littérature de qualité inégale dont les origines remontent aux environs de 1925 et qui gâtait à mes yeux un grave et noble sujet en le situant presque tout entier sur le plan charnel.[13]

What is the nature of homosexuality for Julien Green? Not only is it for Ian "la révélation de sa nature profonde et de l'amour le plus impérieux",[14] it is a "passion".[15] In L'Autre Sommeil, having recognized his desire for Remy rather than for Andrée, Denis had written:

> Rien de mystérieux comme le cheminement d'une passion dans un coeur sans expérience. Elle semble parfois se perdre et disparaître, mais une fatalité la mène et sa route est sûre.[16]

Green's position is clear: inversion is the result of the workings of fate. In his attempt to explain his dilemma to Jimmy, Ian says: "...choisir n'est pas possible".[17] What he will do that very night is "me jeter contre mon destin comme on se jette contre un mur".[18] Like Irène who cannot eradicate her desire for women, like all the homosexuals of A la recherche whose seed was planted in Sodom and Gomorrah, Ian's homosexuality "vient de plus loin". The décor of Sud underscores this:

> Pour bien comprendre le décor, il faut se figurer une vaste maison bâtie sur le modèle du temple grec de Paestum...[19]

The classical Greek aura of fate and tragedy has finally --in 1953--been coupled with the theme of homosexuality.

However, Ian's inversion is not at all a "mal". The author makes it clear that his hero "...n'a en aucune manière le sentiment d'être un paria ou un lépreux".[20] Homosexuality is neither a "tare" nor a sin; it is determined by forces beyond one's control, but is not morally condemned. Where, therefore, lies the tragedy of Ian Wiczewski? Green is again explicit:

> Le péché d'Ian Wiczewski n'est pas d'avoir aimé Erik MacClure, mais bien d'avoir cruellement fait souffrir une femme à qui il demandera pardon.[21]

If the primary action of the drama turns on Ian's homosexuality, this homosexuality is only the means, the façade, which Green uses to depict a more important question for him: the lack of love of one individual for another and the suffering and tragedy which is its result. In his desire to express his love to Erik MacClure, Ian is blind to love itself. From the first scene of the play, the animosity which he feels toward Regina cannot be caused simply by a hatred of women. He wishes, as did Denis at first, to remain apart from the world, to remain untouched and pure. Jean Sémoulé in Julien Green ou l'obsession du mal calls this "une crainte de contamination, comme si

l'intégrité de l'être, physique et morale, courait quelque risque".[22]

Then Erik appears. With the awakening of both his true sexual desire and this "shadow-vision" of MacClure as his own double, Ian is forced tomove out of himself. But in his movement toward a single individual, toward a doubling of himself, he does not simultaneously realize the love which is paramount for Green, the love of Christ, love as "caritas".

Ian's specifically homosexual love fails, but so does Erik's love for Angelina. The two men are ironically similar in that both experience a love which they are unable to bring to fruition; both are afraid, both suffer. Yet there is a difference between the two loves, the hetero-sexual one and the homosexual one. Ian finally comes to the realization of it in saying:

> --...mais c'est un amour bien raisonnable
> que le vôtre et singulièrement bridé, qui
> souffre qu'on le mène ici et qu'on le garde
> d'aller par là...[23]

The love of Erik for Angelina is within the established order; it is only Erik's own weakness and fear which keep it hidden. He will not make a decision, but will flee, in his bad faith, using the war as an excuse.

Ian cannot flee. His homosexual love, inexpressable and more stifling, must burst forth. Through his desire for another man, through a forbidden love, Ian--not Erik--eventually comes to the realization of the power of love itself. In accusing Erik--"...c'est l'invincible ignorance des purs devant la souffrance du monde"[24]--he finally understands, and condemns, himself. Unable to destroy his adversary-double because, as he had explained to Jimmy, one does not stop loving by annihilating the object of one's love, Ian therefore destroys himself--by the hand of his double.

The play of contrasts echoes throughout Sud: the North against the South, heterosexual love and homosexual love, the pure and the impure, the strains of Abide With Me which open the play and the closing cannon fire. The very minor character of Eliza serves no other purpose in the play but to symbolize the uniting of two disparate elements into one.1 Born of the union of two races, this mulatto woman is a slave who at the same time commands those slaves blacker than herself. She lovingly caresses her straight hair, but runs at the whim of her white mistress.

Two men who love are juxtaposed with two women who love. Angelina's wish to be loved by men, her physical

desire, is the other side of Regina's pure love for Ian and her love of God. If Ian perceives Erik as his double, it is actually Regina who resembles him more. Both are "purs", both foreigners in this Southern milieu. Love between them is impossible because of Ian's homosexual passion. The heterosexual mask he attempts to don by asking for Angelina's hand in marriage falls from his face immediately. He is not even given the chance to wear it, as Irène had done in La Prisonnière. There has been a great change in attitude from Bourdet to Green, from the 1920's to the 1950's. Now marriage has no longer even a possibility of transforming homosexual desire. A greater understanding of inversion has not only destroyed the earlier belief that homosexuality was a curable illness, but has toppled the faith in marriage as a saving and redeeming institution.

Once fate has played its hand with the arrival of Erik MacClure, there can be no turning back. Ian's request that Regina forgive him comes too late. The characters are caught at the climactic moment of their lives and of history; they are locked within the traditional classical unities. The atmosphere on the plantation is as stifling as that of the seraglio in Bajazet. The impending

fateful shot at Fort Sumter weighs on the characters as did the imminent arrival of Amurat. It is in this milieu, in this world where slaves were whipped while genteel women (Mrs. Strong and the ladies Riolleau) talked of the beauty of duelling and made marriage arrangements, that Green chose to situate his homosexual play. Sud is certainly not an apologia for homosexuality, yet Ian does achieve a more noble grandeur than any of the other characters. He does come to the realization of both his homosexuality and his lack of "caritas" before destroying himself.

Regina takes his place as his body is carried onto the stage. ("Regina se place à droite, exactement à l'endroit où se tenait le lieutenant Wiczewski au début de la pièce."[25]) It is now her turn to manifest the love, the charity, which Ian realized only too late. However, she had not responded to Ian's cry for forgiveness; her own charity is perhaps nothing but words.

> Elle pousse un cri terrible.
> --Ian, reviens!
> Elle s'écroule auprès du mort; à ce moment, on entend au loin le grondement du canon; le vent souffle et la fenêtre bat. Rideau.[26]

No one is saved and the cataclysm erupts. Homosexual or heterosexual, to Julien Green, where love in its profound Christian sense is lacking, only tragedy can result.

The forgiveness refused by Regina is granted to his own murderer by Wilfred Ingram at the end of Chaque homme dans sa nuit. With his simple "oui", the heroes of Julien Green pass out of their dark nights into the light. This light is found in Christian charity and forgiveness and "chaque homme dans sa nuit s'en va vers sa lumière".

The final scene in the novel is between James Knight and Angus, two of the cousins of the dead young man. James Knight is the figure of respectability in the heterosexual world--and also the husband of the woman Wilfred had loved. Angus is the respectable homosexual--who had loved Wilfred. Knight describes Wilfred's dead face as radiant with happiness, as alive:

> C'était comme s'il nous avait joué un tour en s'en allant, un tour de jeune garçon, et malgré ses paupières closes, il semblait nous observer de loin, comme d'une région de lumière.[27]

Wilfred had never regained consciousness after his forgiveness of the man who had shot him, the homosexual Max. It is precisely because of this final manifestation of charity that Wilfred resembles a child, that James Knight equates his death with "un tour de jeune garçon". Wilfred, like Bernanos' Chantal de Clergerie and the curé d'Ambricourt, is saved through his childlike love. For James Knight

Wilfred becomes a kind of intercessor for everyone--including Angus. It is this important homosexual character who, after listening to Knight's ecstatic words, brings the novel to a close with his own response:

> Angus se courba en deux et porta les poings à son front.
> 'Taisez-vous, supplia-t-il. Ne dites plus rien, rien, rien.[28]

Is it because of his inversion that Angus refuses to continue to listen to James Knight? No, it is rather because homosexuality has so gained control of him--he is now virtually the prisoner of the diabolical Ghéza--that he has lost even his basic yearning for God.

Angus is only one of the homosexuals who people Chaque homme dans sa nuit. If his words close the novel, it is Ghéza whom we meet on the first page; two homosexuals "frame" the novel. In his voyage toward self-discovery[29] Wilfred Ingram encounters more homosexuals than heterosexuals. Yet he himself has no homosexual desires at all.

The aura of mystery and the unknown is constant in the works of Julien Green--in the novels which reflect his interest in Eastern religions as well as those whose themes are specifically Christian. Fontfroide is bathed in darkness and mystery, as is the character of Moïra, who appears

as a physical reality only at the end of the novel which bears her name.

In a similar way, homosexuality is a shadowy presence, and evokes the same atmosphere. With the exception of Angus, who admits his love for Wilfred to him in a cautiously-worded letter, none of the men who swarm around the hero is specifically described as an invert. Everything remains in the realm of suggestion. Max is the clearest example of this. If the reader were told clearly that Max was a male prostitute, the dark atmosphere in which Green cloaks this incarnation of the demon would be shattered by a simple and real fact. But the reader does not really know until the end of the novel, and Max has thereby kept his aura of mystery. Max's homosexuality is like Vautrin's--never openly stated, only suggested, and therefore more haunting. This blending of the shadow of homosexuality with the shadows of the landscapes and houses to evoke the shadows within a man's own mind is Green's most important contribution to homosexual literature. It is similar to the Proustian motif of concealment--Mlle Vinteuil under the overcoats, the narrator overlooking Montjouvain or the courtyard--and, if both authors succeed in producing an air of doubt and mystery, Green's shadows are ultimately more haunting.

Moreover, the veiling of homosexual desire has another artistic advantage in Sud. If Ian cannot reveal his passion to any other character in the play, the spectator nevertheless realizes his attraction to Erik. Thus is established a link between the audience and the hero. This link leads to a complicity which leads, in turn, if not to an identification with Ian, at least to a refusal to criticize. Phèdre could reveal her incestuous love to Oenone and the drama was thus able to resolve itself within the confines of the stage. But Ian needs the audience for his tragedy to have meaning. Regina, at the close of the play, says: "Je savais. Je savais tout".[30] Broderick thinks he understands. But do they? We do not know for sure, because Ian has not revealed himself to them as Phèdre did to Oenone. In the world of the play itself the mystery remains.

In Chaque homme dans sa nuit Max is the most mysterious character but not the only one. Wilfred's pious friend Tommy suddenly leaves both his job in a Catholic bookstore and his strong faith to work for an art dealer whom he had, by "pur hasard"[31], encountered in the street. When Wilfred inquires about the details of so abrupt and complete a change, Tommy can only blush. Wilfred's supervisor in the

clothing store, Mr. Schoenhals, is overly solicitous of the young employee's welfare. In front of the Knight's house a stranger "fixa sur Wilfred un regard attentif"[32] and tries to speak with him. One entire chapter is devoted to the "propositions" that a man with "un nom fort connu dans le monde du théâtre"[33] makes to the hero. Wilfred encounters homosexuals at work, in his room, at Wormsloe, and even in front of the house of the woman he loves.

Angus is the respectable invert, the handsome and successful young man, proper and correct. He is overly concerned with his appearance; Wilfred first notices "un magnifique nécessaire de toilette".[34] His mother dominates him and Green succinctly compares their trip together to Italy to "un voyage de noces".[35] It is because of his great fear that his mother will find out about his homosexuality that Angus lets himself be blackmailed by Ghéza. The relationship between Angus and Ghéza reflects the one between Wilfred and Max. Both Angus and Wilfred in their search for purity and a religous answer are tempted--each by an incarnation of evil and sensual desire. Angus, in the absence of both God and the pure love of which he dreams, gives himself over to the evils of the flesh--to Ghéza, who is another Max. Wilfred is tempted

by the carnal solution also, but is able to flee it at the final moment. He refuses Max's command to "Obéir!" whereas Angus remains locked in his anguish.

Although homosexuals, both Angus and Max are doubles of Wilfred: each reflects one side of the hero's dualistic nature. Wilfred's struggle lies in the tug-of-war between his carnal desire and his wish to lead the life of the Imitation of Christ; he moves back and forth between churches and bars, now hangs, now removes a crucifix from his wall.

Angus ironically represents the love that Wilfred desires in this world, a love which Angus himself wishes to be pure. He flees Wilfred, asks his cousin not to visit him because he is afraid of being too attracted by Wilfred's physical beauty. At the same time he is drawn by what he believes to be Wilfred's purity and genuine faith. He writes:

> J'ai beaucoup de faiblesses, mais je ne suis pas véritablement un homme de plaisir et il y a des jours où mon horreur de la chair égale peut-être la tienne. Cela vient, je pense, d'une hérédité qui nous est commune. Tu es un peu ce que j'aurais voulu être moi-même.[36]

Angus thus searches for his own ideal self in his cousin. (He has symbolically given him his gloves.) In return he offers to Wilfred the love which the latter ideally and profoundly desires. Wilfred reads the letter from Angus;

it is the first love-letter he has ever received:

> En vérité, cette lettre était stupéfiante. Elle le jetait en face de lui-même.[36]

But it is from a man, and, after an hour's reflection, he rejects the love proferred by Angus with the words:

> --En tout cas, je ne suis pas comme lui.[37]

If Angus is Wilfred's double "du côté de l'amour", Max is his double "du côté de la chair". Both men are attracted to the hero because of the Christian purity they see in him; Angus desires to appropriate it, Max to destroy it. Max is the carnal side of Wilfred. He counsels him to sleep with Phoebé Knight in spite of the sin of adultery which weighs upon Wilfred's conscience. He gets him drunk, will not leave him alone. Angus desires to flee Wilfred's presence; Max puruses him without respite. And Wilfred is attracted to Max, realizes that this mysterious and bizarre young man is the only one who can comprehend his anguish.

However, the doubling of Wilfred with Max and Angus is never precisely homosexual. The hero is attracted only to women (although there are fewer of them who cross his path than homosexual men) and each of Wilfred's doubles has a female counterpart: Angus is mirrored in Phoebé, Max in the Spanish waitress and all the girls Wilfred meets in

the bar. Phoebé is the Beatrice, the pure and childlike woman. But she is married and the combination of this fact with her religious beliefs and her flight from the flesh preclude her union with Wilfred. If he is attracted to Phoebé because of her purity, the Spanish waitress excites him because of her mystery. But this aura is quickly dissipated:

> L'Espagnole n'était plus rien à ses yeux. Il y avait trop songé et elle avait perdu son mystère.[38]

The waitress--her nationality recalls Balzac's Paquita Valdès and Vautrin disguised as the Spanish prelate--disappears from the novel, whereas Max, whose mystery remains, takes on greater and greater significance.

What is singularly important in Chaque homme dans sa nuit is that women are present who do represent the two poles toward which Wilfred is pulled. Our heterosexual hero need not be attracted to the two corresponding men as sexual objects. They are rather his symbolic doubles, aspects of his own personality with specific sexual desire removed. Homosexuality is not the theme of the novel, but the homosexual characters are present as a means of depicting Wilfred's struggle and of representing the dual nature of man, at the base of the Roman Catholic Green's theology.

Wilfred has yet another double, perhaps the most important: Freddie and Wilfred both work in the same store, both are tormented by religious questions, both fear and are tested for a non-existent venereal disease, both die in the same hospital bed. Wilfred is the cause of Freddie's death because of the anguish he releases in the young man concerning "la maladie". But if he kills him, he also saves him through his death-bed baptism. This is more important for Green. Freddie dies because of his dread of the disease contracted in sexual intercourse: he dies of an over-evaluation of the flesh. So does Wilfred die at the hands of the symbol of lust, Max. But as the syphillis was non-existent, so do the words of James Knight, "Il vivait, il vivait!",[39] imply that death was non-existent for Wilfred. If Freddie is saved by his baptism, Wilfred is saved by his forgiveness of Max.

The theme of the double has haunted Julien Green. Purely homosexual and most physical in L'Autre Sommeil (Green's Catholicism was at ebb-tide at the time of its original composition), it served as the primary symbol in Sud, where Erik MacClure is both the lieutenant's double and the object of his sexual desire. By 1960 and Chaque homme dans sa nuit, the homosexual characters are not objects

of desire, but symbols representing aspects of the hero's inner personality. Green's use of the uranian motif is thus different in these works and reflects both a change in his own ideas and a variation of stylistic techniques.

We do not have a detailed picture of the homosexual subculture in the works of Green. There are different types of inverts: Denis is not Angus, nor Angus, Max. But the inclusive fresco of homosexuality which we see in reading Proust is not to be found. Nor do we find a judgment for or against inversion. It is true that Sud may be considered a plea for tolerance: Ian would perhaps have suffered less if he could have revealed his love for Erik. But Green made it clear in his Avant-Propos to the play that Ian's tragedy is the result of a lack of love rather than as a result of his inversion. In the final analysis, the homosexual in Green's works is no different from the heterosexual. It is sexuality itself which is the enemy of those who would be "pure". If Ian and Erik do not come together, neither do Wilfred and Phoebé. Any attempt to find a double in this world fails; the only doubling which will succeed for Green's characters is the doubling with Christ.

NOTES

1. Plato, 319.

2. Julien Green, Sud, in Vol. IX of Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Plon, 1960), Acte II, scène 4.

3. Green, L'Autre sommeil, 71.

4. In many ways L'Autre sommeil is a parody--a tragic one--of Gide's own adolescence.

5. Green, Sud, I, 1.

6. Ibid., II, 4.

7. Green, L'Autre sommeil, 39.

8. Ibid., 44.

9. Ibid., 67.

10. Ibid., 71.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Green, Sud, "Avant-Propos".

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Green, L'Autre sommeil, 45.

17. Green, Sud, II, 4.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., "Note".

20. Ibid., "Avant-Propos".

21. Ibid.

22. Jean Sémoulé, Julien Green, ou l'obsession du mal (Paris: Editions du Centurion, 1964), p. 71.

23. Green, Sud, III, 1.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., III, 2.

26. Ibid.

27. Julien Green, Chaque homme dans sa nuit (Paris: Plon, 1960), p. 404.

28. Ibid.

29. It is a voyage that Wilfred symbolically takes, from the moment he arrives at the railroad station and perceives the wide-open, uncluttered landscape--in which everything is possible--to the moment of his death.

30. Green, Sud, III, 2.

31. Green, Chaque homme dans sa nuit, 345.

32. Ibid., 367.

33. Ibid., 182.

34. Ibid., 43.

35. Ibid., 38.

36. Ibid., 162.

37. Ibid., 163.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 166.

40. Ibid., 403.

DIVINE: FROM HOMOSEXUALITY TO SAINTHOOD

With heroism and love, the twentieth century has buried God. But if God is dead, sanctity is not. Malraux's Katow, in giving his vial of poison to another prisoner in the locomotive, is a saint. Kyo had kept the time-honored heroic gesture of taking his own life; Katow sacrifices an easy death for a horrible one--for the sake of a man he does not even know. There is no tract of heroic bravura in his action. No one sees his gesture, no one will. No statue will be erected in his honor. Charlemagne will not weep, nor Rome tremble. He will die hideously by being pushed alive into the fiery engine of the locomotive.

Religious faith is not involved here. Katow's sacrifice resembles the sacrifices of the saints, but they at least had a vision of God--a faith or a hope--to sustain them. Katow's act revolves upon itself alone. If St. Catherine spent the night in the cell of a condemned man, resting her head on his penis, she knew that God so wished it. Genet's Divine goes further: she sleeps with the condemned man, knowing all the while that if he could, he would be with a woman.[1] Divine is a saint--or rather becomes one, after a long and gruelling ascension. Divine has become twentieth-

century literature's most famous secular saint; with the exception of Charlus, she is also France's most well-known literary homosexual. Is Divine a saint precisely because of her homosexuality?

The fact of Divine's inversion need not be proven--it is eminently patent. But it is important to note that her homosexuality is the characteristic which immediately defines her; it is her most salient personality trait. If almost all of Genet's characters are homosexuals, none is more emphatically so than Divine. Notre-Dame may first be thought of as a murderer, Erik as a German soldier, Querelle as a sailor. Divine is first and foremost a homosexual. Her entire existence turns upon her inversion. If she works, it is as a hustler. She leaves her room either to look for a man, to join her "sisters" at a bar, or to steal for Mignon. Without her homosexuality there would be no Divine. Genet has drawn a portrait <u>par excellence</u> of a flamboyant "femme" homosexual. Simply as a realistic picture of a certain type of invert, she is without equal in literature. But Divine as either a picturesque or realistic queen would not be the Divine who continues to intrigue the reader. She is more than either a cartoon character or a sociological study. She is the incarnation of a saint.

The young Divine--Lou Culafroy--lives in a manner similar to his two forebears mentioned by Genet: St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bernadette Soubirous. He is different from the other children, prefering solitude to playing games with his peers. He runs home fast when school is over. He is a loner: "Il apprit seul à danser, comme seul il avait appris le violon".[1]

His mother dresses him in girl's clothing and he is forced to go to school wearing a dead woman's high-heel shoes. His father is not present and his mother, lost in her own dream world, allows him to do the same. His fantasies are born early and Lou prefers to live in a magical medieval dream world, the age of knights and saints. He is a religious boy, loving especially the pomp and splendor of the ritual. His dreams are of men:

> ...seulement le murmure de quelques mots magiques épaissait la ténèbre d'où se dégageait un page ou un chevalier, beau bandeur, défait par une nuit aux draps de toile fine...[2]

At the same time, Lou is strangely envied by the other boys because he is different and lives in a slate-roofed house. St. Bernadette was also envied by the other children of her village. If Culafroy's childhood is similar to that of the authentic saint, it also resembles that of the classic homosexual youth. A loner, unsure of his sexual

identity because of his mother's influence, thus living a heavily religious fantasy existence, he cannot be accepted by this world.

Then comes his vision. It is not the standard vision of Christ, the Virgin Mary or a saint. (Indeed in his search to find a religious answer, he had dared to profane the Host. When nothing happened, the usual religious quest was abandoned.) Lou Culafroy's vision is of a man, of Alberto the snake-fisher:

> C'était l'été qu'il flânait par les chemins. Du plus loin qu'il vit sa silhouette, il comprit que la clé et le but de sa promenade était là.[3]

The goal of the saint's life is to see God; Culafroy sees him very physically present before him:

> Alberto était immobile sur le bord du chemin, presque dans les seigles, comme s'il attendait quelqu'un, ses deux belles jambes écartées dans l'attitude du colosse de Rhodes ou dans celle que nous ont montrée, si fiers et solides sous leurs casques, les factionnaires allemands. Culafroy l'aima. En passant devant lui, indifférent et brave, le gosse rougit et baissa la tête, tandis qu'Alberto, un sourire aux lèvres, le regardait marcher. Disons qu'il avait dix-huit ans, et pourtant Divine le revoit comme un homme.[4]

The final word "homme" is to be taken in the context in which Genet always describes his men. Not only has the extreme masculinity of Alberto already been emphasized by the author, the vision is seen in full daylight and is very physically present.

Mystics have written of a great fear which accompanies their vision; it is here symbolized by Culafroy's horror of the snakes which he finally overcomes by touching them under Alberto's guidance. There are other similarities between Lou Culafroy and the traditional saint. The boy meets his god each morning "près d'une croix de granit"[5]; St. Bernadette returned daily to the grotto. The mystics also proclaim that they are penetrated, completely infused by the God of their vision. In Genet's world, the transposition is physical: "Alberto viola l'enfant de toutes parts..."[6] Moreover, the ultimate experience of a mystical vision, after the tears and horror, is a plenitude of joy. This ecstasy is symbolized by Culafroy's moonlight dance among the hanging sheets as he awaits the arrival of his god. It is at this moment that Culafroy becomes Divine, that he becomes a "woman". He pictures himself a ballerina --and becomes one.

Thus does Culafroy's vision of his god--masculinity--change his life and set him on his way to Paris. But he cannot speak of his revelation. As St. Bernadette's family first scoffed at her stories, a boy does not announce his love for a man. He suffers in silence, and Lou must hide his grief even when Alberto loses his eye. Thus, with the

apparition of Alberto begins Divine's march through suffering toward sanctity. Alberto and the snakes which he entwined about Culafroy will change into other men and other penises. Alberto himself can vanish from the novel, for, in Genet's world, one Male may replace another. But this does not stop the older Divine from later remembering with joy the hours spend with her vision--her first homosexual lover. "Elle pense que ce fut la plus belle époque de sa vie".[7]

> Very shortly afterwards, it was revealed to Catherine that she must now go forth into the world to promote the salvation of her neighbour, and she began gradually to mix again with her fellow creatures.[8]

And so Divine arrives in Paris. She enters her first bar wearing a champagne silk blouse (her feminity), blue trousers stolen from a sailor (her tiny bit of masculinity has been pilfered from a "real man"), and sandals (her saintliness).

> A l'un quelconque de ses doigts, mais plutôt à l'auriculaire, une pierre comme un ulcère la gangrenait.[9]

With this ring, both the homosexual queen and the budding saint are symbolically wed. It also recalls the ring placed on St. Catherine's finger by Christ during her vision. In addition, the ring gangrenes her, gives her

pain. Suffering has been forever the lot of the saint in this world. Whether willed or not willed, pain and suffering must be met and conquered before the saint reaches eternal bliss.1 It is through suffering that Genet will now lead Divine; it is a suffering based upon her homosexuality.

For the Christian mystic, it is impossible to adjust to living in this world after one has experienced the vision of God. For the homosexual it is similarly impossible to live authentically in a heterosexual world and still be true to one's nature without lying and leading a false existence. Proust depicted this all too well. But Divine cannot live a life à la Charlus. She will bear witness to her homosexuality as the saint bears witness to his faith. Divine is the only fully-developed character in all of Genet's novels who flaunts her inversion in the world's face. (The occasional feminine actions and gestures of the boys at Mettray are enclosed in a prison environment, far from the world's gaze. Lieutenant Seblon almost destroys himself in attempting to hide his femininity.) The result is suffering, a suffering born of rejection.

Divine is spurned by everyone in this world. The boy Culafroy had no friends and no meaningful relationship with his one remaining parent, his mother. Divine in Paris is

ridiculed and mocked by all heterosexuals from the moment she arrives. But the "normal" world, children, and a bizarre mother are one thing; Divine is also rejected by "her own".

There are three basic homosexual types in Genet's novels: the "queens"--the Carolinas, Mimosa and her group, and, of course, Divine; the adolescent toughs--Riton, Divers, Roger, etc.; and the super-males--Querelle, Erik, Harcamone, Mignon, etc.[10] Divine is rejected by all three types.

The queens appear at times to be Divine's friends. But their gay camaraderie is superficial, painfully so. Mimosa steals Mignon from her "beloved sister" Divine; the two fight viciously. Mimosa is harder, more cruel than Divine; she always defeats her in their word-duels. There is no honor among queens. Even among those like herself, Divine has not a single friend. St. Catherine had helped a leper and a woman dying of cancer, but they "rewarded her loving care by ingratitude, abusing her to her face and spreading scandal about her behind her back".[11]

Secondly, in a brief scene, Divine is taunted by a group of young toughs:

> --Les voyous se moquaient d'elle. Ils disaient que cela devait faire mal, les bites, que les vieux...; que les femmes ont plus de charmes...; qu'ils sont des macs, eux...et

> d'autres choses, qu'ils disent sans doute sans méchanceté, mais qui blessent Divine. Sa gêne augmente.[12]

Her most painful rejection is by her lovers, the males. In spite of her occasional moments of happiness with them, Mignon and Seck Gorgui leave her. Genet makes it clear that a homosexual union is not like a heterosexual marriage:

> Nos ménages, la loi de nos Maisons, ne ressemblent pas à vos Maisons. On s'aime sans amour. Ils n'ont pas le caractère sacramentel. Les tantes sont les grandes immorales. En un clin d'oeil, après six ans d'union, sans se croire attaché, sans penser faire mal ni faire du mal, Mignon décida d'abandonner Divine. Sans remords, qu'un peu d'inquiétude que peut-être Divine ne consentît plus à le revoir.[13]

Not only is Divine abandonned, she is finally completely forgotten. Mignon comes to her funeral, but without really knowing why; he feels no sorrow, no longer remembers her:

> Mignon ne reconnaissant plus le grenier qu'il avait habité avec Divine eut les gestes bornés d'un jeune homme en visite.
> Son émotion en face du cercueil? Nulle. Il ne se souvenait plus de Divine.[14]

Divine's suffering increases with her aging. Here Genet strikes at the heart of the queen's dilemma. She at first fights the wrinkles and loss of hair with creams and a wig. She has false teeth. She takes Seck Gorgui as a lover in part because he is a Negro and might therefore not be able to recognize the signs of aging on her white

body. Her envy of Notre-Dame's youth grows stronger each day. She rationalizes this aging which she loathes yet cannot alleviate by telling herself that she is actually becoming more virile. But she must now pay the men who formerly paid her. Finally she fights no longer: "Elle se coupa les cils pour être encore plus répugnante".[15] She thus inflicts her own stigmata on herself; like St. Alexis, she finally chooses her own dung heap. As the people of this earthly world had rejected her, so does the earthly movement of time gravely increase her suffering. Divine's struggle against time and its devastation recalls that of Charlus. But the baron continued to fight to the end: he opened his brothel late in life and, in his final apparition, although he sits gray and ill in his carriage, his eyes continuously search for young men. Charlus maintains a strength and dignity which the aging Divine cannot muster. She is more pathetic because she lacks his grandeur.

Although the world rejects the saint, she does nevertheless have her effect on it. Through her homosexuality, Divine does alter the vision of the world. The other children had spurned Culafroy because he was strange and different; yet at the same time they saw him as a royal child. Divine's flamboyant arrival in a heterosexual bar not only evokes

jeers and insults, but entire conversations change. Drunk, she stands on a street corner singing the Veni Creator in her falsetto voice:

> En tous les passants naissent des petits couples de mariés voilés de tulle blanc, qui s'agenouillent sur un prie-Dieu de tapisserie; les deux sergents de ville se revoient garçons d'honneur à la noce d'une cousine.[16]

It is not the "vast crowd of 4000"[17] who assembled to watch St. Bernadette kneel before the grotto, but in her small way the queen singing on the corner imparted a religious vision to those passing by. Moreover, Divine's greatest effect is on her lovers and on all men. The saint is to sing the praise of God; Divine sings unceasingly the praises of her men. Because she worships them, even their physical characteristics change, even their smiles:

> ...les très jeunes hommes vers qui elle se sent attirée...luirenvoient aussitôt ce sourire, plus cruel, comme si, lancé par les dents de Divine, il rebondissait sur leurs dents plus aiguës, plus froides, plus glaciaires, parce qu'en face d'elle-même plus froidement belles.[18]

Mignon, so frozen in his masculinity, becomes softer, more tender because of the years spent with Divine.

However, as much as she may alter the world, the saint's ultimate dialogue is not with the world, but with God--that is, with the god in herself. It is the hero who desires to change the world; the saint has passed beyond

it. And so Divine enters more and more into her own private world, into a solitude that is in part willed, in part necessitated by her rejection as a "pédérasque".[19] Her own fantasy world encloses her to a greater and greater degree; her gestures become her reality. As Culafroy dancing between the sheets did not play at being a ballerina, but was a ballerina, so Divine is the rich lady in the Pullman car. The saint can live this magical fantasy life--as can the prisoner Genet--can live in the world without truly participating directly in its movements. It is in this respect that Divine resembles the saint, but at the same time she is a saint à la Genet, she is not a nun. Divine does not retire to a convent and remove herself completely from the external world. Even her successful gestures will not permit this:

> Ce petit geste pour se détacher du monde, Divine l'a recommencé cent fois. Mais, si loin qu'elle s'en écarte, le monde la rappelle à lui.[20]

She cannot leave the world completely because her god is of and in this world. In her moments of deepest anguish, it is again her vision of Alberto that gives Culafroy-Divine the strength to continue to live:

> Il allait chanceler, peut-être tomber, quand le Souvenir avança exprès pour le secourir: le souvenir du pantalon de velours d'Alberto...où il crut retrouver d'apaisantes, de consolantes nichées de mésanges.[21]

The consoling Memory recalls Proust, but on an even more physical and sexual level: Alberto's dirty trousers. In spite of the unusual setting of Genet's novels--prisons, ships, the homosexual underworld--and in spite of the importance given to the fantasy life of the mind, he is less of an "escapist" than Cocteau or Alain-Fournier. The world never loosens its grip on any of Genet's characters.

And then one day Divine, who had fought against this sanctity that she knew was part of her--the saint never proclaims herself such--relaxes, and is taken up by the hand of God. She dies "sainte"[22] in her garret room. The room itself symbolizes Divine's life: it was an arduous climb to reach the garret, but at the same time the room touched the sky. Divine dies as close as possible to heaven, just as Riton and Erik make love and die on the rooftops of Paris. Yet there is a suggestion that perhaps she does not die; at least to her mother she remains alive for several moments after actual death because of a watch which keeps ticking in her hand and on which Ernestine's hand is resting.

Her funeral would have made Divine happy. Première Communion takes a cue from her late "sister" and imagines herself dead. The queens carry bouquets of violets, giving

off the scent which permeated the room in which St. Bernadette died. The priest deserts the funeral cortege to be raped by a woodcutter. Queens with umbrellas like haloes, the arrival of the god Mignon ("Passa l'Eternel sous forme de mac."[23]), the homosexual priest: it is a mixture of sanctity and homosexuality that defines the funeral.

Moreover, even though the rites for Divine appear at the beginning of the novel, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs closes with a letter which Mignon wrote to Divine from prison. It is a love letter, signed with dotted lines: the outline of Mignon's prick. Could anything else have given the homosexual saint more pleasure? The letter is from her god and it tells her that all is well.

Thus Divine attains sainthood through her homosexuality. She is a lonely child who sees a vision; then, forced to live in a world which consistently rejects her, she becomes more and more ascetic. Her suffering increases with time and she enters into a dialogue with her own self, lives in a world of gestures which become real and ultimately save her. Her solitude is necessary to her salvation, as it is to all of Genet's protagonists. Homosexuality is the taboo which isolates in Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs as being a militiaman does in Pompes funèbres and the act of murder in Querelle de Brest.

If the world does not accept her, she in turn rejects it. Louis Culafroy is a biological male. In becoming Divine, he disowns his own sexual identity. In moving to Paris to lead the life of a blatant queen--which would be impossible in her small town--Divine turns her back on her noble lineage and her privileged position in the slate-roofed house. In openly loving men, she rejects society's commandment. In choosing her homosexual existence, she sets herself against the world, as does the saint. They are both reviled and persecuted. Divine's existence as a homosexual becomes more and more sordid and unappealing. But in terms of sanctity, her life assumes a greater and greater meaning. She ascends. Her ascension as a saint is dependent upon her descent as a homosexual.

To more fully comprehend the importance of homosexuality as the taboo which leads to isolation, solitude and thus sainthood, we must explore the nature of the character who has given his name to the novel. In both his religious and sexual roles Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs stands in contrast to Divine and to Mignon. If Divine is the homosexual saint and Mignon the masculine god, Notre-Dame is the asexual Virgin Mary. The sexuality of Notre-Dame is minimal indeed, of all of Genet's characters he indulges least in either

sexual actions or sexual fantasies. If we do see him in bed, he is not only passive, but actually unconcerned. He physically resembles the toughs of Mettray whom Genet idolized, and both Divine and Mimosa are attracted to him, yet he lacks the erotic character of the colonists and adolescent thieves. It is not simply because he is usually described by images of religion and by flowers--so is Divine. Beyond the simple physical portrait of him at the beginning of the novel, we learn little more of his physicality as his story unfolds. Genet wants the reader to gaze at the arms, the torsos and the penises of Mignon, Bulkaen, Divers, Stilitano--but not at those of Notre-Dame.

His sexual role changes; it is double. At first he is the male to Divine and then to Mimosa. But he becomes the female on the night of the masked ball. He goes to the ball in "drag" and returns home to be deflowered by Gorgui. The word "bisexual" is inappropriate in Genet's world, since no women are present. But Notre-Dame does stand between the sexual polarities of "super-male" and "flamboyant queen". To say that he is homosexual is saying little in the context of Genet's novels. In a complete picture of human sexuality we would have to classify him as an invert, but within Genet's cosmos he remains an "intrasexual" being,

or, perhaps, an androgynous one. He combines both sexes within himself; he is beautiful both as a young man and in drag. Indeed, it is his blond hair which alone is described during his trial; a blond youth resembles a girl more than does a dark-haired one, Genet is quick to remind us: "Des filles blondes comme des garçons... Je ne me lasserai pas de cette phrase..."[24]

If one does not usually dwell on the sexuality of the saints--and this is one of Genet's shocking innovations--there are nevertheless the St. Jeromes and the St. Augustines to keep Divine company. But the sexuality of the Virgin Mary is never mentioned; both the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth preclude this.

> ...j'oserai dire que tous les yeux purent lire, gravés dans l'aura de Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, ces mots: 'Je suis l'Immaculée Conception'.[25]

It is during the trial that everyone perceives this identity. What is most important in the character of Notre-Dame is his innocence, his purity--and this as a result of his murder. He entered the novel "par la porte du crime"[26] and this contrasts sharply with the first appearance of Divine, dead in her vomited blood. Because of his murder, Notre-Dame is already within his own solitude, beyond this world. He is less present at his own murder trial than was Meursault.

Divine had committed a murder also, but, in comparison to Notre-Dame's, a petty one. Although she carefully planned to have the neighbor's little girl fall to her death from her balcony, Divine did not push the child. Moreover, she acted within a moral context (however inverted), and thus her gesture did not have the beauty and isolating quality of Notre-Dame's almost gratuitous strangling of the old man (or of Querelle's murder of Vic). Morality, like sexuality, is of this world and must be dealt with by Divine. Notre-Dame is beyond both of them.

Thus does Notre-Dame stand as a contrast to Divine. He does not think, does not make conscious gestures, does not deal with the reality that torments Divine. Notre-Dame does not suffer. His sexuality is amorphous. Adrien Baillon becomes in an instant Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs at the outset of the novel through his act of murder; he <u>is</u> henceforth Notre-Dame. It is a much longer ordeal for Louis Culafroy to <u>become</u> Divine and for Divine to <u>attain</u> sainthood. It is the homosexual Divine who becomes the saint by passing through the Valley of Desolation which is the queen's path:

> Divine: --Ma vie? Je suis désolée, je suis une vallée de la Désolation.[27]

If Genet has given the name of the androgynous Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs to his novel, it is Divine who is its principal

character, the one whom we follow from childhood to grave, the one who holds both the narrative and the characters together. Does Genet place one higher than the other? Certainly the Virgin Mary stands above all the saints in heaven. But she is an ideal, conceived without sin. Similarly we know nothing about Notre-Dame's actual birth; he is "born", also sinless, at the moment of his murder. Both exist in a sexless aureole which floats above the world. Divine, with her silk blouse, her tiara of false teeth, her consumption and her snakes, is a human figure. It is not ultimately a question of hierarchy, but of two separate modes of existence. And of the two, it is the suffering homosexual who compels the reader's compassionate thoughts.

NOTES

1. Jean Genet, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, in Oeuvres complètes, Vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 94.

2. Ibid., 74.

3. Ibid., 90.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 92.

6. Ibid., 93.

7. Ibid., 96.

8. Butler's Lives of the Saints (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1963), Vol. II, p. 193.

9. Genet, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, 24-25.

10. These latter are, in Genet's fantasy-world, not homosexual. But they sleep with men, so let us be unkind to Genet and consider them such.

11. Butler's Lives of the Saints, 194.

12. Genet, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, 123.

13. Ibid., 54.

14. Ibid., 21.

15. Ibid., 196.

16. Ibid., 47.

17. Butler's Lives of the Saints, 300.

18. Genet, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, 50.

19. Ibid., 26.

20. Ibid., 198.

21. Ibid., 204-205.

22. Ibid., 14.

23. Ibid., 15.

24. Ibid., 179.

25. Ibid., 178.

26. Ibid., 60.

27. Ibid., 196.

LOVE: A STORY

Time: circa 1900
Place: France

Love was dying again. The flighty but passionate heroine of French literature had been slowly succumbing since the Romantics had brought her back to life a hundred years ago. From her most glorious moments in the courts of Arthur and Aliénor, she had continued either to sing or to weep through Ronsard's sonnets, Racine's tragedies and Molière's comedies. Her good health had continued down into the eighteenth century. But the philosophers of that age, finding little attraction and no enlightenment in Love, refused to care for her in the devoted manner to which she had become quite accustomed. Most of them simply ignored her and she grew weaker and weaker. A few concerned souls--a certain LaClos and a certain deSade--tried to help her by putting her to bed. Yet their cure did not involve rest, and they whipped her into such a state of physical and mental exhaustion that she was barely able to escape. Knowing that her end was near, she finally dragged her tired and mutilated body into a dense forest where she hoped to die in peace.

Gamboling through this very same forest, a certain young Jean-Jacques stumbled against poor dying Love. He

would save her! He devoted his life to caring for her and when his time finally came, he left her to further recuperate in the chateau of a young protégé, Chateaubriand by name.

Now this young Breton had a good friend, God by name. The philosophers who had neglected poor Love had tried to destroy him too. But they could not succeed entirely, so they decided to allow him to wander around incognito; he must never reveal himself in his old hallowed form. The bumbling old man was even summoned to appear at an occasional state ceremony--heavily veiled, of course. One day while he was stumbling about in Brittany--one was nicer to him there--he happened upon this same Chateaubriand who invited him to his castle where Love was recuperating. The grateful God helped his host to completely cure Love. The neglect of the philosophers and the sticks and stones of the deSadians had broken many of her bones, but she now returned to radiant and passionate health.

She lived a marvelous life for about thirty years. She gamboled in the luxurious forests, danced through Spain and Italy and, yes, even wept from time to time. But God was there to console her in these sad moments.

Yet people seemed to be getting sick of both the lakes of tears and the overly passionate dances. With growing

industrialization, Love was forced to leave the mountains and streams and move to the city. God came with her, but neither of them could adjust. No longer was she allowed to float about in gossamer gowns or even be tragic in a Spanish mantilla. The realistic people of the new age looked at her with all their new scientific-type things. They brought their friends the psychologists, who were even able to examine her without instruments. Love was becoming very ill again, because of both her own over-activity with Chateaubriand and his friends and under the heavy scientific-realistic scrutiny. No one seemed to care much.

There were a few idealistic types who wanted to keep her alive--but they insisted on changing her very identity, making her either so ethereal that she had no body at all or else trying to metamorphize her into a hideous monster. In the meantime, her good friend God had died, and was buried, and did not rise again. She was alone and dying very fast.

One perceptive commentator of the time, anguished by Love's moribund state, cried out from his own loveless hell: "L'amour est à réinventer, on le sait". Indeed it was true, on le sait. This bumptious adolescent did not

like women, had no morals, consorted with demons and was a child--he said so himself in his position paper. But what was worse was that this youthful upstart put his words in the mouth of a homosexual! He himself was one--on le sait. To reinvent Love, to cure her, by making her homosexual--never! And so his words went unheeded for a couple of generations.

Love herself was so worn-out that she was at the point of succumbing for good. Just at this moment two inverted young men (not working together), believed they had found a cure! Perhaps remembering the cry to reinvent love, they were going to give her a new form--a homosexual form. Love would have both a new body and a new soul. Love would be saved!

One of them, a certain André, piteously trying to shake off an overbearing mother and her persistent belief in the late God, traveled to sun-and-boy-drenched North Africa (very healthy), rummaged through tomes of Plato, Virgil, and Theocritus (very dusty), and even spent hours carefully examining the sexual habits of dogs, weevils, and Belgian carrier pigeons (very scientific). All to try to save Love. But the tanned Arab boys brought him only pleasure, not a cure for poor Love. And weevils reveal their secrets only to other weevils.

Still undaunted, but now middle-aged, the same André came very close to a cure through his Greek readings. But he would not go all the way in the constant devotion and dedication that Love needed to become well again. For, to tell the truth, he was interested in Love only for what she could do for him, not in Love herself. (She was too feminine, anyway.) He lived to a very healthy old age, having done great and marvelous things for homosexuality and for reading weevils--but nothing for Love.

The other young man--Marcel by name--really was interestedin Love for her own sake. The son of a famous physician, he examined her minutely with his homosexual microscope. A kind of naturalist also, he prefered bees and orchids to weevils, but his scientific probings led him no further in finding a cure than did André's. So he turned to people, examined them very carefully--oh, so carefully--and did find and impale specimens of homosexuals in love. But they were such an unhealthy bunch. How could poor dying Love be helped by a baron in chains or a spitting lesbian?

Anyway, he had certain preconceptions which good scientists and doctors are not supposed to have. He knew that God had been rotting under ground for many years, but he nevertheless kept faith in one of the old man's stories

--one about Sodom and Gomorrah. It was a sick story about sick people; it was no remedy. In fact, this doctor's son seemed to be more interested in finding pathological substances under his microscope than in finding a cure. In each of his papers he delved more and more deeply into the matter--all the while amusing himself by having rats slaughtered in his room by butcher-boys in blood-stained aprons. And Love was in her final agony.

Marcel finally believed that Love could not--and should not--be saved. Homosexual love was little different from heterosexual love. Both were contaminated by the germs of power, possession, jealousy, and boredom. And so he sterilized his hands and went for a spot of camomile tea.

Thus Love was not reinvented, was not saved. The two men who thought they might save her just let her continue to waste away. They had done much for homosexuality, but little for Love. As one of them stood on the Acropolis and complacently contemplated Athens, the other gazed wistfully at a Vermeer--and Love died. Really, this time. She had become very old and very diseased. She was given full funeral rites and buried very deep in the earth. Love was dead.

It was with Genet that Rimbaud's cry "L'amour est à réinventer" receives its full meaning. It is from hell

itself that love is reborn, that homosexual love is created. Heterosexual love had received its full funeral rites. From its decayed remains, from death itself, Genet has resurrected love to a point which makes the Romantic conceptions pale, and evokes in mythic power only the Dionysian love feasts. It is not at all ironic that Genet's great panegyric for love should be entitled Pompes funèbres. For the greatest love is born from death--Jean Genet's love for Jean Decarnin--and ends only in death--Riton's killing of Erik. Death and love together? A paradox? No, for love has been reinvented.

Genet's fictional world has been described as topsy-turvy, upside-down, as a reverse mirror reflection. In short, all is inverted. And so is his conception of love. It resembles very closely that of Rimbaud's "Vierge folle", but ends in ecstasy and glory, rather than in despair.

Only men exist in Genet's world, only men love. Women are less present than in Gide's works, but the relationships between two men would have shocked Plato. We are very far from any Greek homosexual ideals. There is a mentor-youth relationship in Genet's works, but what is admired in the "older" man--who is no older than twenty-five--is his accomplishments in crime, deception, and betrayal. The

Greek mentor is now the super-male; each and every characteristic traditionally associated with masculinity is exaggerated by Genet: strength, daring, hardness, insensitivity. Men are never soft, caring, tender, or even loving. All of Genet's "matous" are interchangeable in their maleness: Mignon resembles Erik who resembles Bulkaen who gives birth to Querelle, etc. The individuality of these characters does not lie in their masculine attributes. They are ultimately not individuals, but symbols, personnifications of penises. They are symbolized by hard, cold, and monolithic objects: rocks, walls, ice, guns, cannons. Their real and solid presence is conveyed by their clothing and their gestures; they wear cleated boots, leather, tight blue pants. They smoke cigarettes from the corner of their mouths and usually are first seen walking toward the reader with a swagger. They never work, or if they do, it is as pimps, thieves, or sailors. Genet likens them both to monsters and to heroic warriors. The epitome of this type of male--if one can be singled out--is perhaps Paulo of Pompes funèbres. Taciturn, unfeeling and nasty, he is described as hard and angular. It is only Hitler who succeeds in dominating and buggering him. Indeed, it is a mentor in evil that the Genet adolescent yearns for. "Le Démon!--C'est un Démon, vous

savez, ce n'est pas un homme,"[1] cried la Vierge folle. Such is the object of love.

The lover is always Genet himself, either in the form of a young hoodlum or as a "queen". If Gemet is Divine, he is also Riton. The colonist of Mettray is reincarnated in Roger of Querelle de Brest and in all the adolescents. But just as the mentor retains none of his Greek attributes, neither is the ephebe pure and virtuous. If he has not yet served a prison term, he soon will.

Ideally, this adolescent-ephebe is also completely "male". He does not wonder about his sexual identity, as did Proust's young man on the beach. He is a boy who will become a man with the help of a fully-developed and powerful male figure. We have a double masculinity at play here, epitomized in Mignon's succinct statement that "Un mâle qui en baise un autre est un double mâle".[2]

There are "hommes-femmes" in Genet, but they are different from those of A la recherche. The male and female aspects of a single individual are never balanced equally in Genet. The passive homosexual becomes almost entirely a female being--or the parody of one. The Carolinas, Divine and Mimosa have little more than their penises to remind them that they are male. These are the queens,

the effeminate young men, and--in Divine--the saints. We must accept them as predominantly female because Genet forces us to do so by his use of feminine pronouns and adjectives. They are not shadow-females as in Proust. Charlus' feminine side surfaced briefly as he crossed the Guermantes' courtyard; Mimosa lives her entire life as a woman. Indeed, when she must appear in a man's suit at Notre-Dame's trial, she is at first unrecognizable.

Yet no matter how far the queens go to destroy any vestige of masculinity in themselves, they do not castrate themselves; the penis remains as a hard reminder that love is no longer the man-woman game. This anatomical detail--so important in the great physicality of Genet's world--is also the symbol that love cannot revert to its heterosexual context.

It is not simply a perversion of the traditional characteristics of love, it is the complete subversion of them. From heterosexual to homosexual and from Platonic to physical--these are but the preliminary changes.

Traditional lovers could speak with one another. Communication through words and the consequent sharing of thoughts and ideas have disappeared from Genet's world. The failure of two lovers to communicate is one of the causes

of la Vierge folle's anguish:

> ...je lui dis quelquefois: 'Je te comprends.'
> Il haussait les épaules.[3]

It is not just homosexual love which is so characterized: Marcel and Albertine, Kyo and May, Meursault and Marie reflect this major theme of contemporary literature even before Willie's grunts behind Winnie's pile of sand. One might think that the chasm lay between the sexes, that two men in love might be able to understand each other more easily. (Gide, following the Greeks, depicted this optimistic outlook in Les Faux-Monnayeurs.) But such is not the case. It is reflected in the different language and languages used by Genet's characters. The pimps and thieves use a slang which is forbidden to the queens; the latter have their own expressions which the toughs laugh at without understanding. To illustrate further this impossibility of communication, Genet presents lovers who do not speak the same mother tongue. The author himself, while roaming through many European countries in the Journal du voleur, makes love to countless men--but cannot speak with them. The basic tools of communication are lacking. To think that Mignon might ever comprehend Divine's anguish is itself incomprehensible. Yet they do

love each other, as Riton loves Erik. For they communicate through the sexual act--and this, for Genet, is sufficient.

The sexual act itself is always rough and violent, whether it is between Querelle and Nono, the boys at Mettray or Erik and the executioner. Tenderness is absent; if it should begin to appear, it is quickly disparaged. Mario seems to prefer the coldness of Querelle to Dédé's kisses and fondling. For Genet tenderness in love is dependent upon language:

> Aucun tendresse n'avait pu s'échapper, car l'amour qu'ils se portaient n'étant pas reconnu du monde, ils n'en pouvaient sentir les effets naturels. Seul, le langage aurait pu leur apprendre qu'ils s'aimaient d'amour. Nous savons comment ils se parlaient dans les débuts. En voyant qu'ils ne se comprenaient pas et que toutes leurs phrases étaient inutiles, ils finirent par se contenter de grognements. Ce soir, pour la première fois depuis dix jours, ils vont parler et envelopper leur langage de la passion la plus éhontée.[4]

But they do not speak in words. Instead Erik

> ...attira jusqu'à lui cette bouche qui se colla précipitamment, dans la nuit, à la sienne. Celle de Riton était restée entrouverte, conservant la forme et le calibre de la verge d'Erik.[5]

If the mouth is no longer used for speaking, it nevertheless still has a function.

Homosexuality has often been called "l'amour qui n'ose pas dire son nom". For Genet as for Proust communication

between the homosexual and the world is impossible. But what is more tragic is that language fails even between two homosexual lovers.

Love was traditionally sanctioned by the church with the phrase "'til death do us part", by the common expression "true blue and faithful". In Genet's novels, the lovers jump from relationship to relationship, from bed to bed without a thought about it. Devotion to one person is dead. Divine sleeps between Notre-Dame and Mignon; the author of Miracle de la rose passes from lover to lover with impunity--but with love. Homosexual promiscuity has become a cliché, but we are here concerned with love, not just sex. Still the jumping continues. The only way that Jean Genet can fully realize his great love for Jean Decarnin is to find yet another lover. He does not pine over a lost Elvire, he sleeps with Erik.

Love used to be a fundamentally moral relationship based on a mutual respect and leading toward a positive development of each of the lovers. This has been replaced by blind devotion and worship. La Vierge folle followed her man "dans des actions..bonnes ou mauvaises...". Not only does she not hope to become better because of love, she actually awaits a degradation:

> Avec ses baisers et ses étreintes amies, c'était bien un ciel, un sombre ciel, où j'entrais, et où j'aurais voulu être laissée, pauvre, sourde, muette, aveugle.[6]

Love is a heaven, composed, nevertheless, of the elements of a traditional hell. It is in the same tone that the hero of Journal du voleur enjoys vermin-infested beggars. Instead of carrying a lady's handkerchief into battle, the new lover carries the filled chamberpots of prison guards down five flights of steps. Instead of kissing her hand, he licks their boots. The scent of soft perfume (which even Baudelaire kept) is now overwhelmed by the odor of farts--which is in turn likened to incense. Gone also is the sweet taste of a light wine as the lovers clinked their glasses while gazing softly into each other's eyes; Notre-Dame and Divine deal in cocaine, Querelle smuggles opium. And the soft music? Riton and Erik make love to the echo of machine-gun fire.

Not only do the very acts and accoutrements of love change in Genet, but their settings. Gone are wooded bowers, lakes and beaches at sunset, and perfumed boudoirs. We enter lavatories, dingy hallways, prisons, subway cars, rooftops. The old lover had devoted his entire existence to the eventual plucking of the Rose; the new lover expends

his energy searching for crabs on his beloved's pubic hairs--and then swallowing them. The scatalogical characteristic of "reinvented love" is best exemplified by the act of analingus:

> Quand je m'allongeais sur son dos, que je descendais encore, j'obligeais ma langue à se faire très fine pour fouiller avec précision cette fente aussi étroite que le trou d'une aiguille. Je me sentais y être...(celui-là, je l'ai au cul!)...Je me sentais y être. Puis je m'efforçais d'accomplir bien mon travail de foreuse. Enfin, comme lorsque l'ouvrier appuye à sa machine qui le fait tressauter au centre de la carrière, debout, au milieu des éclats du mica et des étincelles jaillissantes autour de la foreuse a la nuque talonnée par un soleil assommant, un vertige soudain brouille tout et dispose les habituelles palmes et sources d'un mirage, ainsi un vertige brandissait plus fort ma queue, ma langue s'amollissait, oubliant de creuser plus fort, ma tête s'enfouissait encore dans les poils mouillés, et je voyais l'oeil de Gabès s'orner de fleurs, de feuillages, devenir une charmille très fraîche où tout entier je pénétrais en rampant pour m'endormir sur la mousse, dans l'ombre, y mourir.[7]

As the anus becomes a cool garden bower through an act of love, we see that the result of the "new love" is the same as that of the "old": not disgust, but bliss.

Can love survive through all this reinventing? Does it become so deformed that it can no longer be called love? Genet still uses the word. He <u>loves</u> the colonists at Mettray, the criminals of the Santé. Divine <u>loves</u> Mignon. The actions, the values and the goals of the new love are.

perhaps most completely expressed through the relationship of Erik and Riton and in the culminating scene of Pompes funèbres.

Riton, the seventeen-year-old French youth who is a member of the militia during the war (and therefore already a traitor to his country), first encounters Erik in a dark subway car. Erik is another incarnation of Genet's super-male, a German soldier wearing an entirely black uniform and the former lover of the Berlin executioner. In the subway car Riton and Erik are back to belly; the youth feels Erik's penis getting hard against him. He encourages this but the lights suddenly come on and the two, although not at all embarrassed when the other passengers see what they are doing, leave the train and part only with a kiss. We next find them at the time of the liberation of Paris in a room on the top floor of a building where they and other German soldiers have been compelled to hide. Lying next to the German, Riton is aroused by him--or perhaps by his clothing which evokes thoughts of power and death. Realizing that he is in love with Erik, he wished to satisfy him sexually and, after a long scene which graphically recounts both the thoughts and the movements of the admiring adolescent, Riton finally masturbates the soldier.

But it is not until the following day--after Riton has been raped by another of the soldiers in the room--that the Dionysian fervor of his love bursts forth. The soldier and the militiaman have been forced to flee to the roof of the same building, where they hide between a cluster of chimneys.

> Le dos appuyé au monument de briques, en face de Paris qui veillait, Erik encula Riton.[8]

Erik's power is symbolically reinforced by the brick wall (as will be Querelle's) which is further likened to a monument. In truth it is only a chimney, but will serve as a monument to their love. In the eyes of a watching world Erik penetrates Riton. In the Erik-Riton relationship we have thus moved from a kiss to masturbation to sodomy, from a subway to a garret room to a roof. It is an ascension in space--and in the new homosexual love.

> Si les deux mâles debout se fussent regardés, la qualité n'eût pas été la même, de la volupté. Bouche à bouche, poitrine contre poitrine, genoux s'entremêlant, ils se fussent noués dans une ivresse qui les eût enfermés dans une sorte d'ovale clos à toute lumière, mais, dans la figure de proue qu'ils formaient, les corps regardaient la nuit comme on regarde l'avenir, le plus faible à l'abri du plus fort, les quatre yeux braqués devant eux, ils projetaient à l'infini le rayon épouvantable de leur amour.[9]

One man buggering another from behind: we could not be further from the standard heterosexual position. No author

before Genet has so clearly spoken. The "old love" was face to face. This physical position reflected also the concern, the involvement of one partner with the other. Two lovers became entwined with each other, two lives became one. The uniting of two souls in the circular form of the androgyne (Genet interestingly says "ovale": a difformed circle) has been replaced by the image of a ship's prow. Eyes no longer look into other eyes, but straight ahead into an infinity of space. The light of love streams forward, no longer perfectly enclosed in a round form. Equality has also vanished; there is a stronger and a weaker partner.

The sexual position of the two men is crystallized by Genet in an image which evokes not only strength, but which links their action to both history and art:

> Ce relief fouillé des ténèbres sur la surface de brique, c'était la bête griffue d'un blason, l'image sacrée d'un bouclier...[10]

The result of this love is both positive and new:

> Erik et Riton ne s'aimaient pas l'un dans l'autre, ils s'échappaient d'eux-mêmes sur le monde, à la face du monde, en geste victorieux.[11]

Two are necessary to love, but love is not to be a uniting of them. Love is rather a means to the development of each one individually.

Time has also been changed. If the eyes look toward the future, memories of the past assail Erik during this act of love. Past and future intermingle. They ultimately negate each other and the power of love lies therefore in a single present moment. In the middle of this scene of passion, Genet intersperses another scene:

> Dans ces balançoires en forme de cages fermées que l'on voit aux fêtes foraines, deux gosses conjuguent leurs efforts. La cage monte. Chaque oscillation acquiert une plus haute amplitude, et quand la cage arrive au zénith, ayant décrit un demi-cercle, avant que de retomber afin d'achever sa courbe parfaite, elle hésite. Deux secondes elle est immobile. Pendant cet instant les gosses ont la tête en bas, c'est alors que leurs visages se réunissent et leurs bouches se baisent, que s'enchevêtrent leurs genoux. Sous eux, la tête à l'envers, la foule les regarde.[12]

Again we have a circular image in that of the closed cage of an amusement park. But what is important is not the effort to complete the circle--to make the androgyne--but the single moment at the top when the revolving machine attains immobility. It is at this precise moment that the two boys kiss, upside-down, while the crowd looks on. The key word is "immobile": it reappears four more times before the Erik-Riton scene ends. It is the immobility of completeness, of the perfect moment--and the immobility of death.

Their ecstasy completed, Riton picks up his machine gun and kills his lover. There is no other answer. He murders him because the perfect moment has been reached and can only pass into an even purer form, the only purer form, death. Philip Thody writes:

> He (Riton) remains loyal to Erik until the very end, and his reasons for killing him are so unexplained that his act could well be interpreted as an attempt to save his friend from falling into captivity.[13]

This is not at all the case, and Thody has left the path on which Genet has been leading us throughout the novel. (In addition, the words "loyal" and "friend" are very un-Genet.) The death of Erik is his apotheosis. Earlier in Pompes funèbres we read:

> Et de se voir un seul jour, un seul jour se savoir achevé lui suffirait...Nous agissons aux fins d'un bel enterrement de funérailles solonnelles. Elles seront le chef-d'oeuvre au sens exact du mot, l'oeuvre capitale, très justement le couronnement de notre vie. Il faut mourir dans une apothéose...[14]

The end of love is thus death[15] and in making this equation, Genet brings us back, past even the "old love", past romantic and Christian love, to the Dionysian love feasts, in which the oblivion of ecstasy often led to the oblivion of death. The roof scene is preceded by the tableau of a jungle orgy in which cannibals eat their dead king and Jean

Genet devours the flesh of his dead lover, Jean Decarnin. The jungle, the frenetic dancing and the tom-tom music return us to Rimbaud, this time the Rimbaud of the Bateau ivre. It also evokes the dream of von Aschenbach before his own death--from love. Riton himself joins in the frenzy:

> Pendant dix secondes une folie joyeuse fut maîtresse de Riton. Pendant dix secondes, il piétina le cadavre de son ami. Immobile, le dos appuyé à la cheminée, les yeux fixes, il se vit dansant, hurlant, sautant autour du mort et sur lui qu'il écrasait sous les talons ferrés.[16]

How far we are from the ideal repose of traditional love--and even from the Apollonian heaven which the Greeks sought!

Through ecstasy to death for Erik--but to solitude for Riton. For if one of the pair is "immobilized" into the eternity of death, the other, in killing his lover, attains a complete and perfect solitude. Riton had killed many times in the course of the novel; he had even been part of a firing squad. Yet the murder of the beloved, like the betrayal of a fellow criminal, is an even purer act in the conquest of solitude. Solitude had been what Riton had been searching for. What is solitude for Genet?

> ...la solitude, ou sainteté, c'est-à-dire encore le jeu incontrôlable, étincelant, insupportable de sa liberté. A qui m'oppose que Riton n'est pas seul puisqu'il aime, je veux répondre que sans cet amour il n'eutpas été librement jusqu'au sommet.[17]

Proust and many others had rejected love because they believed that the union of two beings was impossible. Genet knows this from the start, but uses it, turns it upside-down, uses it positively and makes it a basis for the new love. It is not the joining which is important, but the separation; separation at the beginning and separation at the end. In Querelle de Brest Genet has defined love as: "conscience de la séparation d'un seul, conscience d'être divisé, et que votre vous-même vous contemple".[18] The androgyne was split by the gods; it will remain split. Is love to be buried yet another time? Not at all, for if love itself is not an end, it is a most powerful means, a means to reaching the summit of solitude and sanctity, this sanctity which is the equivalent of the absolute freedom in which one may be completely himself. "Abandonné de ses amis, de ses parents, de son amour, de la France, de l'Allemagne, du monde entier",[19] Riton sees himself dancing and screaming in ecstasy precisely because he is now completely alone--and completely free.

A new love is thus born in Genet's works, yet there are two elements of the old love which he does not discard. The first is just suggested at the very end of the Riton-Erik scene, but pervades the entire novel through the

spirit of Jean Decarnin. It is the belief that "love is eternal", that the spirit of the dead lover affects the living one:

> Les Japonais, rapportent les journaux, ont conseillé à leurs soldats de lutter même après la mort, que leurs âmes soutiennent et dirigent les vivants...La beauté d'une telle objurgation (qui me montre un ciel débordant d'une activité en puissance, plein de morts s'efforçant de tirer) m'incite à faire prononcer par Riton cette phrase:
> --Aide-moi à mourir.[20]

If Riton asks his dead lover to help him die, Jean Genet asks his dead lover to help him write. The dead lover becomes the inspiration, the Muse, as Marie was for Ronsard and Elvire for Lamartine. The gender has changed: a man has become the Muse for another man. And in the time-honored tradition which Genet does not reject, art is born from love.

The other aspect which the new love does not reject is the simplest, and perhaps the most important, of all: happiness. It is attained, however, only by first passing through pain. It is the physical pain which is a part of homosexual love-making:

> La verge perforant faisait si mal à l'enfant qu'il ne désira plus qu'un surcroît de douleur afin de se perdre en elle.[21]

The pain is necessary (as it was for Divine) but also

desired. It reflects both the anguish and the great love of la Vierge folle, whose lover is both a "démon" and "mon petit ami". The movement from pain to an unbearable happiness by means of homosexual love is perhaps best expressed during the same scene between Erik and Riton:

> Tout le membre y passa et les fesses de Riton touchèrent le ventre chaud d'Erik. Ce fut le grand bonheur pour l'un et pour l'autre et un grand désarroi car ce bonheur était atteint.[22]

Thus does a specifically homosexual love, passing through physical pain in the case of Riton and mental anguish in the case of Divine, lead to an ecstatic joy. The Riton-Erik scene is indeed a Dionysian burst of passionate love-energy.[23] When the moment has passed, the lover is either dead or irretrievably alone. But both death and solitude are positive values for Genet. If solitude leads to the perfect play of freedom, it is from death that art is born. Without the deaths and loves of both the fictional Erik Seiler and the real Jean Decarnin, Pompes funèbres would not have been written.

NOTES

1. Arthur Rimbaud, Une Saison en enfer, in Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1972), p. 103.

2. Genet, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, 157.

3. Rimbaud, 104.

4. Jean Genet, Pompes funèbres, in Oeuvres complètes, Vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 161.

5. Ibid.

6. Rimbaud, 104.

7. Genet, Pompes funèbres, 160-61.

8. Ibid., 158.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 159.

13. Philip Thody, Jean Genet: A Study of His Novels and Plays (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), p. 113-14.

14. Genet, Pompes funèbres, 162.

15. It is a powerful example of the "Liebestod" motif in which love is so pure that it can reach apotheosis only in death.

16. Genet, Pompes funèbres, 162.

17. Ibid., 102.

18. Jean Genet, Querelle de Brest, in Oeuvres complètes, Vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 220-21.

19. Genet, Pompes funèbres, 162.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 160.

22. Ibid., 159.

23. And Genet knowingly brings us back down to earth with his closing description of the return and sleep of the little maid.

THE MASK FALLS: QUERELLE DE BREST

Jean Genet realized the corrosive effect of the mask worn to placate the world, but turned it around and used it to the greater glory of Divine. His first homosexual hero put on her costumes and her gestures--and attained sainthood. Wearing her wig, seldom leaving her garret, she eventually negated the real world and entered into her solitary dialogue with God. She attained the freedom through masquerade of which Starobinski writes, but only after passing through the ridicule and mockery which her mask evoked in the eyes of the world. It was a special calling, and its success was ultimately dependent on the complete negation of the real world. It is a path for the chosen few, but one which most inverts would not follow. The mask is too flamboyant, the road too strewn with pain, and the break with the everyday world too difficult to make.

The problem of the homosexual mask continued to torment Genet. Finally in Querelle de Brest he examined the entire question--and found a new solution.

> C'est donc sous le signe d'un mouvement intérieur très singulier que nous voulons présenter le drame qui se déroulera ici. Nous voulons encore dire qu'il s'adresse aux invertis.[1]

In his own words at the beginning of Querelle Genet dedicates this last novel to the homosexual and then removes himself from it. The "I" of his previous works is replaced by a third-person narrator who recounts the drama of the sailor Querelle from his arrival to his departure from the city of Brest, from his uncertainty of his own nature to the realization of a strength which will henceforth enable him to conquer all worlds. Joseph H. McMahon[2] sees Querelle primarily as a symbol of power; Richard N. Coe[3] considers him an exemplar of evil. That Querelle is a hero is not questioned; both critics underscore the sailor's success and victory over the other characters and also over himself. But let us not forget that the book is addressed to inverts; Querelle's victory is also the victory over the homosexual mask. Through more logical arguments than in his preceding novels (the name "Querelle" evokes a "Quarrel", a "dispute" or "argument") Genet liberates his hero--and himself--from the negative effects of homosexual disguise.

In Querelle de Brest there are four attitudes toward homosexuality represented by the four major male characters, Querelle, Seblon, Gil and Mario. The last three wear masks to conceal the inversion they see within themselves; all

ultimately fail. The masks they wear first are not successful in hiding them from the world, and secondly, blind them to an understanding of their own selves. The latter is the more devastating in this novel in which each homosexual looks in his own mirror.

In Saint Genet, Comédien et Martyre Sartre maintained that Genet's writings were the attempt to justify his own existence in the eyes of the outside bourgeois world which had rejected him during his childhood and adolescence. The importance of this "Other" to the homosexual is reflected in Divine's singing on the streetcorner and in the Riton-Erik love-making on the rooftops of Paris. In her first steps on the road to sanctity, Divine needs the Other. In Querelle de Brest the inter-relationships between Subject and Object are not without importance, but the emphasis has been shifted to the individual homosexual's ability or inability to see himself as he is. If the novel is dedicated to inverts, it is not primarily a study of the interplay between one homosexual individual and another or between the homosexual and the world. In Querelle de Brest, more than in his previous works, Genet looks at the pros and cons of the homosexual mask within each of the four major protagonists.

Lieutenant Seblon admits his own inversion in his diary, but takes the greatest care to hide it from others. He has chosen a naval career so that he will not be asked why he has not married. He has his hair cut short, adopts gestures and a tone of voice which he thinks are very virile. He thus attempts to conceal the femininity which he sees in himself behind a uniform, an occupation and an attitude. "Derrière son visage sévère il était à l'abri."[4] Like Charlus he even condemns his fellow inverts to the outside world as "...ces dégoûtants personnages..." Seblon is the most lucid and intelligent of all the fictional homosexuals in Genet's novels; he works the hardest at wearing a very proper and complete mask. He nevertheless deceives no one but himself. Querelle sees clearly through the lieutenant's poses, as do the police. It is rather Seblon who becomes blind--both to Querelle as he is and to himself as he is.

First, Seblon's vision of the Other becomes more and more distorted. Originally attracted to Querelle as the epitome of <u>the</u> Sailor, he is still the Genet who searched for the super-male in <u>Miracle de la rose</u>. But now the fantasies have deleterous effects. He wants to see his idol <u>only</u> as a replica of his dream image. It is he who places a mask on Querelle and then watches him. Any sense

of reality has vanished. He imagines the dirt on his orderly's trousers to be the semen of those who have ejaculated while fellating him. In one of the key scenes of the novel Querelle appears before the lieutenant covered in coal dust. To live up to his chosen role of navy officer Seblon should reprimand his inferior. But he cannot muster the strength to order Querelle to the showers simply because he enjoys too much looking at the sensual lines and bulges which the black dust imparts to the sailor's body:

> Sans doute ce n'était qu'un peu de poussière de charbon--dont on sait ce qu'elle est, de quoi elle se compose--et cette chose si simple, si banale, si bien capable d'avilir un visage et des mains, accordait à ce jeune marin blond la puissance mystérieuse d'un faune, d'une idole, d'un volcan, d'un archipel mélanésien.[5]

The lieutenant has become the prisoner of his image of Querelle. What is even more ironic is that Seblon momentarily suspects that Querelle might really be the murderer of Vic (which he is). It is a truth perceived in a lucid second, but it is immediately rejected, because, to truly accept this thought as a fact, Seblon would have to assume a homosexual rapport between the two men. This he cannot do, because such a liaison would destroy his image of "Querelle as heterosexual". With Seblon, if imagination at first colors reality, it eventually stifles it.

He moves more and more into a fantasy world; all sense of the real world disappears. His attempt to resist Gil's attack is done simply to reinforce his mask of virility. (It is pathetic for the lieutenant because no one is nearby to witness his display of courage.) His subsequent admitting to the theft which he did not commit is an absurdly romantic gesture. Finally his passion for Querelle makes him pursue the sailor through the bars and cafés of Brest and eventually:

> Il ne voyait rien; la buée rendait les vitres opaques mais ce qu'il devinait derrière elles était bien plus émouvant.[6]

Fantasy has become Seblon's reality, as it was Genet's from the opening pages of Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs. If Genet has removed the "I" from Querelle de Brest, Seblon is nevertheless the author re-evaluating his own homosexuality. Seblon is the Genet of Journal du voleur: both are keepers of diaries, both passive homosexuals who see themselves as feminine. The entries from Seblon's diary which state that he would do anything for his beloved, his dreams of being the admiral with Querelle as his devoted orderly, directly recall Genet's wish to follow Armand to the depths of Siberia.

Is Seblon condemned or vindicated? Has Genet, in this novel, smashed the mirror image of himself? In the only

scene in which he attempts to make love (with a young dock worker) Seblon finds himself lying on a turd. The odor forces the docker to flee and Seblon remains alone. As he cleans himself, he feels shame, but from this shame, this humiliation, is born humility. In the last excerpt from his diary, he sees himself as a Christ figure:

> Je ne connaîtrai la paix que baisé par lui, mais de telle façon qu'enfilé il me gardera, allongé sur ses cuisses, comme une 'Piéta' garde Jésus mort.[7]

If Seblon is Genet, Genet was Divine. The end of Seblon's story leads us to the beginning of Divine's march through homosexual humiliation to sainthood. In this respect, Genet's last novel leads us back to his first one. Divine was saved by her gestures, which were her mask and her poetry. Seblon is also the poet. It is through his diary that he is a positive, living character, not because of his homosexual attitude. Within the uranian world of Querelle de Brest Seblon's romantic fantasies are ultimately sterile. He is both a fake officer and a fake thief. Genet seems to criticize his own past attitudes, his idealization of the super-male and his own feminine self-image. The homosexual à la Seblon will be defeated unless he follows Divine's path or becomes a writer. In the real world--which is the setting of Querelle de Brest more than any other of

Genet's novels--the homosexual mask which Sehlon wears leads to a dead end. The sailor is the victor, not the lieutenant.

Mario is drawn to a homosexual act by his need for power and to sustain his super-male self-image. Behind the uniform-mask of police chief there lurks fear, the fear that he is not all-powerful and that Tony (the docker whom he sent to prison and who is now free) will finally "get him". Mario relies on the young informer Dédé to keep him supplied with information about the mysterious Tony. In an effort to counter his fear, Mario goes out one evening without the protection of his revolver. But Tony never materializes in the novel and Mario is therefore unable to confront this fear directly. It will continue to gnaw at him.

Mario is not a practicing homosexual; he is not even attracted by the adolescent Dédé who worships him and covers him with kisses. Yet he comes to the point of wanting to bugger Querelle, taunts him and even fights with him because of this desire. The answer to this apparent enigma is found in Genet's linking Mario with the other super-male of Brest, Nono.

To the sailors and to the men who frequent the brothel la Féria, Nono, the husband of the madam who has control over so many women, is the epitome of masculinity. Mario is first seen at la Féria as a kind of double of Nono. Querelle is disturbed by the strength and masculine auras of the two men. Mario makes no overtures to Querelle until he has learned that Nono has sodomized the sailor. If he cannot do likewise, his own masculine image will fade in his own eyes. (Mario, of course, does not understand the rationale behind Nono's act. The latter needs his homosexual acts to reinforce his own self-image: he must bugger all men who desire to make love to his wife. In this way he attempts to mitigate any feelings of shame and impotency when these men later do sleep with her. It is another mask in the "need for masculinity" game and is also seen as a sham by the simple fact that his wife's only lover until the close of the novel is Robert, a man whom Nono has not sodomized.)

Mignon had professed that "un homme qui en baise un autre est un double mâle". After mastering Querelle in a fight (although he must flash a knife to gain the upper hand) but before trying to bugger him, Mario must convince the sailor that he knows he is not a "pédé". He must do

this to keep intact his own image of a virile Querelle; his buggering an effeminate Querelle would not satisfy his masculinity complex.

Mario does not succeed in sodomizing the sailor. He tries, but fails. Not only is he unable to "prove his masculinity" by this act, he cannot even succeed in uniting with his mask of police chief. His power is nothing more than his uniform and his desk. Mario's weakness is represented by the fact that, although he has access to the police files and therefore knows and controls all criminals, he is powerless before the most criminal of all--Querelle. After discovering Querelle's link with Nono, Mario is firmly convinced that the sailor has murdered Vic. But he will do nothing about it. He needs the sexual encounters with Querelle to bolster his self-image, and consequently he is unwilling to pursue his belief and bring the sailor to justice. He is a sham as a police officer.

Not only concerning his external actions, but also within his own mind, Mario's reasoning processes are false. He believes that Querelle's homosexuality led him to murder, whereas the reader knows the opposite to be true: that his murder of Vic led Querelle to a homosexual act. Mario sees no more clearly than did Seblon.

Mario is trapped by his desire to "paraître". He needs both Dédé and Querelle to master his fear that he is perhaps not the most powerful man, the super-male he wishes to be. He uses homosexuality--the devotion of the boy and the body of the sailor--to secure a self-image which in reality is as tangible as the fog of Brest.

Gil Turko stands as the reverse mirror image of lieutenant Seblon in regard to his inversion. In his diary Seblon bathed in his desires; if he adopted his pose as naval officer, it was to conceal these desires from the world, not from himself. Gil's entire existence is an attempt to flee the homosexuality within him. Gil is the man who will do anything to escape both the name and condition of "homosexual". Seblon, like Charlus, accepted his own feelings and wore his mask only in the world. Gil must wear his mask to convince himself that he is not "queer".

He has homosexual desires which he--less intelligent than either Seblon or Mario--only vaguely perceives. What he does perceive he hates and must eradicate. He caresses Roger, presses his body against the boy's, while conjuring up Roger's sister in his mind. Thus does he first try to

erase his homosexual desire through fantasy. But his imagination is incapable of a prolonged effort in this direction; he here again stands as Seblon's opposite. The lieutenant was capable of great mental gymnastics; Gil is not. He is too close to reality. This is potently symbolized by his hemorrhoids. Divine's teeth and hair were false, but Divine was a deliberate actress and, like her poetic gestures, the teeth and wig were part of her act. Hemorrhoids do not have the redeeming grace of even a cheap wig. They are too real. Moreover, Gil, ironically and pathetically, thinks of them as a kind of mask: they are his protection against being penetrated. Hemorrhoids have become part of the heterosexual mask!

Gil needs the judgments of others to see himself as a man. His world--the world of the masons--sees him as a homosexual because Théo had nurtured this opinion from the moment that Gil refused his advances. Théo, the known homosexual, is always able to dominate his young and naïve co-worker in the milieu of the masons. (Théo's strength is reflected in his success as a master-mason, a wall-builder; Gil has, conversely, the softness of the cat he enjoys stroking.) Unable to escape from the jokes and taunting of Théo and the other masons, Gil must resort to

extreme actions. He first believes he will mislead them by playing their own game; he drops his trousers and offers himself to all the men present--at the same time boasting of his hemorrhoids. The gesture is gauche and puerile and shows how incapable he is of masquerading.

Gil is trapped. He brutally murders Théo in a drunken burst of anger under the eyes of the boy he must impress with his "masculinity". Gil's murder is an absurd act performed in the throes of an absurd passion: the fear of being labelled a "pédé". He has refused to meet Théo on honest terms, has refused any struggle. In first offering himself to the group of masons, and then by the senseless murder, Gil has performed two actions which he believes will free him from the image he so despises. But these acts are crude and lack the grace of Divine's gestures and the subtlety of Querelle's.

Hiding in the abandoned arsenal, Gil becomes more and more pathetic. He has reached solitude through his murder, the solitude which Notre-Dame and Riton used in their conquest of glory. Yet each attempt on his part to give a meaning to his act meets with failure. The moments when Gil touches a kind of lucidity and even poetry are short-lived. He eventually concentrates all his thoughts

on a bundle of rope. Gil is like the rope, a physical object, nothing more.

His solitude is not fruitful because he still needs and searches for the Other: for Roger to bring him food, for Querelle and the group from la Féria to enable him to escape. His attempt to eradicate his homosexuality through the murder of the man who desired him is a complete failure; he continues to be attracted to Roger and is not unmoved by Querelle's advances. If the homosexuality has not been eradicated, neither has the image: it is supremely ironic that now not only the masons, but the whole world looks on Gil Turko--because of his act of murder--as a homosexual. His defeat--inside and outside--is complete. He need only be captured by the police--and Querelle has already arranged for this. Gil's flight from homosexuality fails miserably. Mario, in arresting him, simply flexes his biceps and "le jeune maçon fut vaincu".[8]

Where Gil, Mario and Seblon fail in their encounters with homosexuality, Querelle succeeds completely. By means of his experiences in Brest, he leaves the city both its master and the master of himself. Querelle is, with Divine, the most complex of Genet's fictional characters and is the most complete realization of many of Genet's themes. He is a new type of homosexual in the author's

gallery and the last one fully drawn.

When he arrives in Brest, Querelle is unsure of himself. He is especially concerned with the same problem that gnaws at Seblon, Gil and Mario: his masculine image. At this single point the four characters touch. Querelle is upset by both the strength of Nono and the calm masculine beauty of Mario when he first meets them at la Féria. Only when he leaves the brothel and feels the power of his sailor's uniform does he feel secure. He is still the super-male of Genet's earlier novels--but now he is also viewed from within. The uniform is not sufficient.

If homosexuality had led to murder with Notre-Dame and Riton, it is the opposite path that Querelle follows. Ostensibly to atone for his crime and therefore negate it in his own mind, he deliberately, by cheating at dice, lets himself be buggered by one of the super-males he admires, Nono. This homosexual act marks the beginning of his ascent and a fuller realization of his own power. Querelle <u>had</u> murdered before, but he had never been sodomized. It is the homosexual act which causes Querelle to be reborn, not the murder. He ponders:

> En quoi est-ce, un enculé? De quelle pâte est-ce fait? Quel éclairage particulier vous signale?[9]

Such are the questions the sailor poses to himself. He does not find a specific answer--because there is none. He does

not become a queen, does not think of himself as a female, feels neither shame nor disgrace. He simply reaches an enjoyable climax. ("Querelle déchargea dans le velours."[10]) Throughout the novel a specific homosexual act is the criterion against which masculinity is measured--by Nono, by Mario, and, at this stage, by Querelle. However, Nono is neither more "masculine", nor Querelle more " feminine" because of their homosexual act. Only the sailor realizes this and, as his understanding begins to awaken, so does Genet's masculine-feminine homosexual cosmos of Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs and Miracle de la rose begin to crumble.

Querelle's sexual encounters with Mario reveal a similar truth. This other paragon of virility whom Querelle at first admired and feared will also fall under his power--his power of understanding. As we have seen, Mario is unable to sodomize the sailor, but Querelle immediately drops to his knees and fellates him. The police chief believes--erroneously--that he is manifesting his masculinity and power as the sailor kneels before him; Querelle simultaneously realizes--correctly--that it is he himself who is the controlling force. Genet's perception of the role of fellator as the dominating force cannot be denied.[11] Not only through his fear of being mutilated by

Querelle's teeth ("à la crainte flottant au-dessus de lui que le matelot, hors de soi, ne tranchât son membre d'un coup de mâchoire..."[12]), but also because of the fact that his pleasure depends upon the sailor himself, is Mario shown to be the less powerful of the pair.

Moreover, Querelle sees behind Mario's murmurs of "J'suis un flic".[13] He comprehends the latter's need for an external action which will justify his self-image.

The dominance of Querelle over Mario is symbolized by their jewelry. The wearing of jewelry has traditionally been a mark of power. Mario displays his many rings with as much satisfaction as Madame de Restaud her diamonds or a maharaja his rubies. Querelle is impressed by these rings and sees them as a symbol of the police chief's virility. Yet Querelle has his own jewels, a larger and undoubtedly more valuable collection which he has accumulated as the result of his murders and robberies. He must of course keep them hidden; yet this will be their greatest value. Mario's ostentatious display of his rings is like his masculinity--a part of the mask. Querelle's treasure must remain concealed, like his own realization that he alone, not Mario, is the dominating force in their homosexual relations.

Two sexual acts between men, fellatio and being sodomized, neither lower nor degrade Querelle, but give him greater power. Querelle perceives that the acts which he originally thought would shame him and decrease his virility, actually bring him greater strength because he masters both the men and their situations.

Querelle uses homosexuality to his advantage. Gil was unable to cope with Théo's advances and was driven to murder him; Querelle, on the other hand, plays with Seblon's affection, uses it. Gil's actions are crude, performed without thought on a momentary impulse; Querelle's murders are carefully planned and executed: they are "fantastiques", says Genet. Gil is usually seen in the bright light of day. Querelle, however, is always enveloped in the omnipresent fog of Brest. One can always see oneself clearly in the fog, but to the Other a fog blurs our outlines and enshrouds us in mystery. Querelle and his murder are never seen clearly by Seblon, Mario or any other character.

The contrasts between Querelle and Gil reflect also the use of the solitude which was so important in Pompes funèbres. Gil does not profit from his solitude in the arsenal because he constantly needs another to justify

and help him. Querelle is the successor to Divine and Riton in his solitude. They remained in theirs and attained their glory, but Querelle, already master of solitude at the time of his arrival in Brest, moves more and more back into the world. In this respect he echoes the Nietzchean superman in the third stage of his development when, having realized his difference from the Others and having gained a mastery of himself in his solitude, is now able to return to the world and conquer it.

Querelle is more perceptive than any of Genet's previous super-males. Yet he does not have the mental power of Lieutenant Seblon. This is a good thing. Querelle cannot retreat into the complete fantasy existence of Seblon. If the lieutenant finally becomes the slave of his own imaginings, Querelle never loses touch with the real world. He is a being of mystery, but not of fantasy. In the coal dust scene, it is Querelle who conquers. In contrast to the lieutenant's constant wearing of his uniform, his mask, Querelle has deliberately soiled his own uniform. His mask is freely chosen. He no longer needs the correct uniform he hid behind when he arrived in Brest.

Seblon writes in his diary:

> Qui d'autre que moi subit encore le charme de Querelle? Comment pourrais-je devenir lui?

> Pourrai-je me faire greffer ses plus beaux ornements: ses cheveux, ses couilles? Même ses mains?[14]

"How can I become him?" The theme of the double reverberates throughout Querelle de Brest as it does through Miracle de la rose and les Bonnes. What are its homosexual ramifications for Genet? We have already seen that, for him, uranian love is not to be the uniting with one's ideal image, but is rather an individual progression into a solitude of liberty. The problem of the double haunts Mme Lysiane, Dédé and Seblon. It is conquered by Querelle.

If it at first bothers him in the person of his brother Robert, it is because he wishes to remove the duality, not to become one with the man who resembles him so completely. Robert instigates the street fight with Querelle because he is disgusted by his brother's homosexual liaison with Nono. It is a confrontation between inversion and heterosexuality. Indeed Robert and Querelle are so alike that this fight may be taken as a symbolic clash between two sexual attitudes within a single individual --within Querelle, who still has doubts about his homosexual involvement. Querelle (homosexuality) is the stronger naturally, but Robert (heterosexuality) holds him at bay by flashing a knife. The outcome is almost a draw, with Robert

holding a slight advantage because of his knife, symbol of his cunning. Robert is astute enough to carry a knife; Querelle, at this early point in the novel, is not.

In the second fight scene, Querelle is again held in check, this time by Mario's knife. But in the third and final fight (Querelle is about to be attacked by a group of outraged bystanders because he has struck a young girl who dared to touch the pom-pom of his sailor's cap) it is Querelle who flashes a knife first. He himself has now acquired the cunning to add to his natural strength.

If Robert does hold his brother at bay during the first fight, Querelle eventually negates his double by replacing him as the lover of Mme Lysiane. This final development is not the victory of homosexuality over heterosexuality (Querelle over Robert). Nor does it suggest that heterosexuality is Querelle's ultimate choice (Mme Lysiane over Mario or Gil). Rather it shows again that sexuality itself is a means, not an end.

In its homosexual context the Querelle-Gil doubling is more pertinent than the Querelle-Robert relationship. Here the outcome is also clear. If Querelle had initially seen Gil as another himself--a younger and less experienced one--he slowly begins to adopt not a fraternal attitude

toward him, but a paternal one. He hopes to lead the young murderer in his own tracks. But this is neither the Vautrin-Lucien relationship nor the Edouard-Olivier one. It is when Querelle realizes that he is beginning to feel some affection for his protégé that he betrays him, uses him as he has used Feblon, Mario, Nono and Mme Lysiane. Querelle desires no double, but prefers his potent solitude. It is Mme Lysiane who is rendered impotent by her over-concern with the double; Querelle conquers because he has negated it. It is still solitude which is Genet's goal in Querelle de Brest, as it was in Pompes funèbres. The theme of the homosexual double led to anguish in Julien Green; for Genet it has become superfluous.

> --Et j'fais c'qui m'plait.[15]

These Thelemic words of Querelle to Robert may stand as his motto. Not only does he become master of his actions, but the master of his fate:

> Querelle à son étoile accordera une confiance absolue. Cette étoile devait son existence à la confiance qu'avait en elle le matelot--elle était si l'on veut l'écrasement sur sa nuit du rayon de sa confiance en, justement, sa confiance, et pour que l'étoile conserve sa grandeur et son éclat, c'est-à-dire son efficacité, Querelle devait conserver sa confiance en elle--qui était sa confiance en soi...[16]

Querelle will not be defeated because of this "confiance";

he has kept his faith in his star, which is nothing more than in himself. Seblon also controls his fate, but it is within the special world he has created, within his diary. Querelle never deserts reality. When control begins to pass from his hands, he acts. It is at the very moment in which he begins to wonder about the intricate ties between Nono, Mario and Robert and how they talk about him and his willingness to be sodomized, that he orders Gil to leave the arsenal and that he begins his affair with Mme Lysiane. Everything is confidently planned and he always succeeds.

The success is in part due to the fact that reality is seldom what it appears to be on the surface. Each individual interprets the seeming facts through his own eyes. Genet uses homosexuality to prove this belief. Inversion is "discovered" where it actually does not exist--and vice-versa. The conceptions of the major characters, the police, the masons and the bourgeois of Brest seldom coincide with the truth. Because he has heard that Mario has a young friend (Dédé), Gil assumes that the police chief is therefore "une tante" and will be lenient with him. Seblon, like Charlus, is sure that his mask hides him completely, but the police recognize

his homosexuality at first glance. Yet, in turn, the police are wrong when they assume that Vic's murder was the result of a homosexual love quarrel. Moreover, the sailors believe that Querelle is the paragon of virility because he goes so often to the brothel; the fact that he goes there to be buggered by Nono is never suspected.

The perception of sexuality in others is thus always unclear, if not completely incorrect. Querelle is the only character who understands this. It is his trump card which, through the course of his stay in Brest, he slowly learns how to play and replay. He uses his sexuality to control others and ultimately to master his own self. Through homosexuality he has betrayed Gil, controlled Mario and dominated Seblon--all to his advantage. He has even become master of la Féria, having realized his power over Nono and having replaced his own brother as Mme Lysiane's lover.

In Genet's inverted world, homosexuality was a "good", a positive force on the road to both self-realization through solitude and freedom and also a means of over-turning the traditional values on which society is based. Genet, in using homosexuality in this way, was at the same time assuming the traditional attitude. In inverting the taboo, he nevertheless accepted it. Divine was able to shock

and be reviled only because the post-Hellenic world--and Genet--accepted a "black or white" attitude toward inversion. In Querelle de Brest a revolutionary new attitude is postulated. The conceptions one had maintained about sexuality are now shown to be so various, so mixed-up. Everything relating to sexuality has become gray.

At the end of the novel two scenes quickly appear in juxtaposition. Querelle first obscenely caresses a girl in a doorway, then he shows tenderness toward Seblon. Both are new developments in the already complex sexuality of the sailor. The public display of heterosexuality is followed by a homosexual act of affection. The two scenes balance and contradict each other, leaving a void. For neither Querelle's heterosexuality nor his homosexuality is finally important--it is the use he alone makes of sexuality itself.

Seblon and Gil fail because each one is too concerned with his inversion and his mask. Both accept the traditional "black or white" attitude. Querelle stands in between the realistic Gil and the romantic Seblon. He uses both reality and illusion, both a knife and the fog, both homosexuality and heterosexuality. He does wear a mask, but only because he chooses to do so. He is the liberated homosexual.

In Querelle de Brest Genet has destroyed his own myth of virility. Querelle's strength lies in his perception of the sexual "games people play", not in his uniform or in his hard penis. An "enculé" and a "pipeur", he is none the less virile. Moreover, the "homme-femme" catagories have disappeared along with the super-males and the drag queens. One defines one's own sexuality within oneself, Genet is now saying. He seems to have resolved his own sexual dichotomy in the character of Querelle. This novel is his last; it is also his last major work in which homosexuality is of prime importance. In liberating Querelle, Genet has also liberated himself--and all the inverts to whom the book is addressed--from the tyranny of the mask.

NOTES

1. Genet, Querelle de Brest, 173.
2. Joseph H. McMahon, The Imagination of Jean Genet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).
3. Richard N. Coe, The Vision of Jean Genet (New York: Grove Press, 1968).
4. Genet, Querelle de Brest, 339.
5. Ibid., 228.
6. Ibid., 307.
7. Ibid., 350.
8. Ibid., 266.
9. Ibid., 217.
10. Ibid., 221.
11. See also: Jean-Paul Sartre, Saint Genet, comédien et martyr (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 385.
12. Genet, Querelle de Brest, 338.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 233.
15. Ibid., 262.
16. Ibid., 326.

CONCLUSION--HOMOSEXUALITY: A SEARCH FOR THE SELF

> Le seul drame qui vraiment m'intéresse et que je voudrais toujours à nouveau relater, c'est le débat de tout être avec ce qui l'empêche d'être authentique, avec ce qui s'oppose à son intégrité, à son intégration. L'obstacle est le plus souvent en lui-même. Et tout le reste n'est qu'accident.
>
> (Gide, Journal 3 juillet, 1930)

> For Genet the only truly significant relationship is that of a man with himself.
>
> (Richard N. Coe)

Homosexuality was a theme of ancient Hellenic literature because homosexuality was a vital cornerstone of the entire Greek experience. The uranian motif appeared less frequently in Roman times, but it was with Christianity's condemnation that it disappeared as a subject worthy of literary consideration. The medieval man defined himself in terms of God's commandments. The Renaissance man, in his rebirth to the beauties and vices of this earth, began to seek his justification in reference to this external world. He attempted to find his meaning by looking outward and then reflecting upon

his own place in the context of this exterior reality. In probing his own soul Montaigne nevertheless had his eye also on something outside himself, whether the customs of cannibals or the dicta of Roman philosophers.

As man moved further and further away from the Christian cosmos, the initial religious taboo against inversion became also a social one. It certainly was not a subject fit for discussion among "honnêtes hommes". There are no homosexual protagonists in the literature of the French classical age, nor in that of the century which followed it. Man continued to look outward and defined his own nature in reference to others; he was a social being and the literary character was to reflect what is common and universal to all men.

It is with Romanticism that the search for a definition of the self is turned inward. Whether it is René on his cliff or Moïse on his mountain top, the hero looks within himself for an answer. It is at this time that the first seeds of homosexuality as a literary motif are sown. In this respect, it is not surprising that Balzac included a homosexual relationship within the world of La Comèdie humaine: the Vautrin-Lucien liaison, if not overt, is certainly evident.

Yet it was the symbolists and decadents who openly used the motif of inversion for the first time on a large

scale since the days of the Greeks. It is important that it was these writers, not the naturalists, who exploited uranism. If Zola described a lesbian restaurant in Nana, he was dissuaded from including a major homosexual character in Les Rougon-Macquart. The "vices" of society parade through naturalist literature; alcoholism, prostitution and insanity are but a few. Homosexuality is almost non-existent. It is a meaningful absence. If the naturalists had included inversion in their tableaux, it is probable that the uranian motif would have been differently used in twentieth-century literature. If Zola had produced a work of the stature of L'Assommoir with homosexuality as its core, inversion might have been relegated to the category of "social evil" and disappeared as a powerful literary theme. Alcoholism is the subject of few major literary works of our century.

Moreover, the naturalist hero was defined by the forces of society and nature; the decadent hero defined himself. Consciously desiring to be different and to assert his individuality against both determinism and bourgeois morality, he cultivated the bizarre.

> Suffice it to say, thematically, that the decadent writers are obsessed with homosexuality, and that while the great poets in the era dignify a delicate theme in fine verse, the 'bas-décadents' merely poke about in the sewers and cesspools. They feel they are depicting modern society as it

> is, whereas in truth their lurid imagination is alternately surprising, humorous, or boring. But their literature nonetheless remains a social document and their preoccupation with the problems of homosexuality very real.[1]

Throughout the course of the nineteenth century man's break with God ("When God died, homosexuality became possible", to paraphrase Ivan Karamazov) gradually led to the demise of the religious taboo. At the same time the artist's divorce from society negated the social one. The interest in inversion was, on the other hand, fostered by the nascent science of psychology. In an effort to define the normal, the study of the abnormal became a necessity. The theories of Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Hirschfeld and others, in addition to the sociological surveys made by such people as Carlier, the Chief of the Paris Police, were considered by their contemporaries as sacrosanct. Proust himself was definitely affected by them.

And then came Proust and Gide. The course of inversion as a literary theme in the twentieth century was undeniably charted by two of the greatest novelists of its opening years. Why did these two men decide--and dare--to include major homosexual protagonists in their works? In discussing Proust, Edmond Buchet gives an answer which would also be applicable to Gide:

> Si son oeuvre se meut dans le milieu de Sodome et de Gomorrhe, ce n'est ni par un coup d'audace ni par un coup de désespoir, mais simplement parce que ce milieu était le sien.[2]

The fact that both men were inverts is certainly one major reason; their works are indeed autobiographical. But it is too simple an explanation. In addition the moment was ripe. We have examined the furtive glimpses behind the uranian curtain in Balzac, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and the decadents. It was time for the curtain to be fully raised.

There is a third reason. Whatever the many differences between the lives and works of Proust and Gide, they are similar in that both wrote in order to find themselves. It is this search for the self which is the driving force behind all their writings. The question "Who am I? must be answered by looking inward, not outward.

> Comme quelqu'un qui cherche en tenant une lampe,
> Loin des objets réels, loin du monde rieur,
> Elle arrive à pas lents par une obscure rampe
> Jusqu'au fond désolé du gouffre intérieur...[3]

As worthy descendants of the Romantic subjectivity, Proust and Gide find the very nature of sexuality itself now to be questioned and then answered. Because of these writers themselves, in the creative literature of our century homosexuality is not a religious question nor a social one.

It is a personal one. In all of the works we have discussed, the uranian motif is intimately linked to the larger quest for self-identity and meaning in a world where external criteria are no longer acceptable.

By his very nature alone the homosexual character stands for all "modern men" in two primary areas. First, he is the exemplar of the mysterious, exotic being who is different from the norm, who is alienated from the world; he is the pariah, the outsider, the "étranger". Secondly, he is the unnatural being, uprooted from the earth, and excluded from the recurring cycles of the natural world. These two characteristics are part of the uranian character by traditional definition. Moreover, in his desire to unite with a being of his own sex, he is the prime representative of the theme of the double. Let us consider each of these three aspects in the light of the works already discussed.

If, in all the major works from Balzac to Genet, the moral condemnation of inversion is absent, the mystery and shadows of homosexuality remain. It is Vautrin leading a man up to his room in the middle of the night, Marcel's inability to see clearly the motives behind Charlus' actions at Balbec, Max's bizarre pursuit of

Wilfred. The homosexual protagonist of twentieth-century literature is not the same as the decadents' homosexual: he is never different for difference's sake. Oscar Wilde perfected his bizarreness and reveled in its uniqueness:

> Le vice de Wilde devient...ce que l'inceste fut pour Byron: un point d'appui pour affirmer sa différence.[4]

This is not the case with Gide, Proust or any of their characters.

Proust linked the uranian motif to those of hiding places, the theater and the mask. In Combray the very scene of the boyish Mlle Vinteuil hidden by piles of overcoats is itself introduced by the mysterious hawthorns. We move from the mystery of these blossoms to the mystery of the girl-boy, then to the mysterious play of a sham sadism viewed by the hidden narrator. Recognition comes only when Mlle Vinteuil moves into the lighted room of Montjouvain, just as when Charlus, contrary to his habit of visiting his aunt in the evening, moves across the bright sunlight of the Guermantes' courtyard.

The shadows of homosexuality in the works of Julien Green are like the sfumato of a Leonardo painting. Characters blend into the darkness or emerge only partly from it. And perhaps the greatest mystery of all is that

of the unconscious, of the homosexual who does not realize his own condition. Without knowing the works of Freud, Gide used the theme of latent homosexuality to destroy the concept of a powerful will which believes it can control its own destiny. The homosexuality of L'Immoraliste, like that of Death in Venice, is as strong a force as passion chez Balzac; it is even more nefarious in that it is unknown and completely uncontrollable.

The theme of the mask is related to this mysterious quality of inversion. Because of the young Marcel's inability to comprehend Charlus' mysterious actions, he is led further into his quest to discover the true identity of this enigmatic gentleman who wears so many disguises. For the narrator it is a positive stimulus. But for Charlus himself the masks are devastating; the necessity to live a lie destroys him. The homosexual must remain masked, and therefore an inauthentic being, until he himself freely chooses to wear it or not. None of the Proustian homosexuals reach this liberated state, nor does Gide's Saul. We must wait for Divine to flaunt her inversion in the world's face; it is she who accepts the condemnation of homosexuality and who uses it to reach her own glory. In her revolt she is surpassed only by Querelle who, "clothed" in the coal dust

and in the fog of Brest, uses positively both the mystery and the mask of inversion to become the truly liberated man.

The homosexual character is also the most forceful example of modern man cut off from the cycles of nature, from the continuing flow of life. He is the archetypal mutant. Different from the heterosexual couple which produced him, he is at the same time unable to recreate his own kind. He is a symbol of man severed from the roots of the past and lacking the seed (in a psychological sense) to impregnate the future.

Primitive peoples have an ambiguous attitude toward the being who manifests a break with the natural order: he is looked upon either with adoration or with horror.[5] The conception of divinity as bisexual, as being able to fertilize itself and create the world is absent from the post-Hellenic mind. It is certainly the horrific aspect which has dominated Europe since St. Paul's condemnation of homosexuality. The sterility of Baudelaire's lesbians was reiterated by the fin-de-siècle writers who used homosexual protagonists to represent both the unnaturalness and the uprootedness caused by the industrial changes in modern society.

Proust, stressing so often the pathological nature of

inversion, encouraged most readers and critics to maintain their conception of inversion as a sickness. Yet Swann's love is no healthier than Charlus'; the beautiful hawthorns surround Mlle Vinteuil as well as Gilberte. The fertilization of the orchid by the bee leads to one of the more positive and productive relationships of A la recherche. Proust's nature imagery infuses homosexuality as well as heterosexuality; the one is no less "natural" than the other.

Gide is the strong defender of the complete naturalness of homosexual desire. In this respect he reacts against the decadents' conception of the invert. Even before the militant presentation of this thesis in Corydon, he finds nothing negative in Michel's rebirth to health in sun-drenched oases of Biskra; Bachir, Lossif and Lachmi--and Michel's response to them--are all "good". As we have seen, it is only when he cavorts with the incestuous and debauched--the unnatural--boys of la Morinière that his own corruption becomes evident. The Gidian belief that inversion is a natural and productive urge is also reflected in the positive results of the Edouard-Olivier liaison. And there is also the beautiful Minotaur resting on his bed of petunias, buttercups, tulips, jonquils and carnations.

There is an even greater profusion of flowers in Genet's novels. The men become "flower-girls" when they change their names, the scent of violets permeates Divine's death chamber, Harcamone's chains miraculously become a garland of roses. But different from Gide and Proust, Genet's flowers are almost always cut. Genet does not desire to symbolize the naturalness of homosexuality, but rather to show how it must be used. Cut living flowers (they are never artificial) are arranged, displayed and looked at. One uses them as the homosexual uses his inversion: to produce a display perhaps even more beautiful than flowers which grow organically from the soil.

If the homosexual character is precluded from reproducing himself and from creating progeny, the force to create is nonetheless present. The paths which remain open are two: the creation of a work of art or the creation of another individual similar to oneself. The latter was forcibly presented by Balzac in Vautrin's wish to become a "father" to a new Lucien de Rubempré, and is echoed in Charlus' mentorship over Morel and Edouard's over Olivier. This "way" never succeeds completely: if Edouard does have a brief effect on his nephew, Charlus causes little change in Morel, and it is Vautrin, more than Lucien, who is

molded by their liaison.

Certainly it is the way of art that the homosexual authors Gide, Proust and Genet chose; Edouard and Divine do likewise. In writing his novel Marcel succeeds whereas Charlus fails in his choice of the "way" of the homosexual world. It is Divine who is a complete success: her work of art is her life and, in the bargain, she also becomes a saint. Again we return to the theme of the realization of the self--which in itself is creation. Proust the homosexual turned to art and created both a novel for posterity and a complete self--in both respects annihilating Time. Divine created first her life; her assumption into heaven then places her in the realm of the eternal--likewise beyond Time.

> L'attrait homosexuel, c'est la séduction exercée par l'image idéale de nous-mêmes, par la forme de notre inconscient, quand elle se manifeste dans un autre. Le plaisir que nous procure la vue de quelqu'un dont les traits, les gestes, le style de vie expriment bien un aspect ou l'autre de nos conflits est d'ordre artistique, mais il se situe en bordure de la sexualité...[6]

The search for the double, "d'ordre artistique", includes both creation and self-realization. It is not the Romantic theme of the double, used by such writers as Alfred de Musset and E. T. A. Hoffmann. These writers, in postulating

both a self and shadow self, wished to break with the Cartesian view of man as a whole and single personality. The homosexual, on the other hand, reaches out to another of his own sex, thereby attempting to achieve a unity which is reminiscent of the Greek concept of the completed androgyne. In this respect, the homosexual stands between the heterosexual man who, in searching for a woman, tries to unite with that which is different from himself, and the narcissist who attempts to coincide with his exact double. The theme is handled differently by each of the authors we have studied, and reflects their own conceptions of what a homosexual relationship is.

Proust and Genet, believing in the "homme-femme" personality structure of the homosexual, are closer to the traditional heterosexual pattern. Charlus is attracted by the masculinity of Morel as Divine is by that of Mignon; they see themselves as feminine and look for masculinity to complement themselves. The homosexual double as a reflection of oneself is consequently much less pronounced in their works, precisely because it is based on the time-honored sexual polarities.

It is interesting that both Genet and Proust, in their grafting of heterosexual patterns onto the homosexual world, evoke past ages in which a religious orientation was paramount: Proust, the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah;

Genet, the medieval world of saints, sinners and miracles. Both Judaism and Christianity condemn inversion as being against the "natural" union of man and woman. In none of the works of Proust or Genet is there lasting union between two men. Proust finds his salvation alone, in art, whereas the joining of Riton and Erik, although pure and absolute, is followed immediately by murder. The salvation of Genet's characters is always found in solitude.

Green's heroes look for their double in a man who is almost completely similar to themselves. He approaches the narcissistic pole. Denis does not realize that he loves and wants to unite with his cousin until both of them are orphans. Lieutenant Wiczewski states that he first saw Erik MacClure as himself. They in no way see themselves as feminine; the "homme-femme" fixation is entirely absent. Both of these characters try to coincide with their doubles to escape loneliness. But at the same time they cannot become narcissists because solitude is terrifying for them. They also fail in uniting with their doubles; Denis' final despair and Wiczewski's suicide are the tragic consequences of this attempt to find themselves through a homosexual doubling. It is only in the later Chaque homme dans sa nuit that the doubling with Christ brings a lasting peace.

It is always an age difference which separates Gide's homosexual partners. The object of attraction is a youth --and with youth its attributes of beauty and health. The "man-woman" theory was anathema to this pederast and in his works he chose the world of ancient Greece as his remembered past time--not the Christian world. The latter, represented by the Pension Vedel-Azaïs, is the arena of hypocrisy, fatuity and the suicide of the innocent Boris. The Greek ideal of mentor-pupil is closest to the center of the line drawn between the heterosexual pole and the narcissistic one. It is the most purely homosexual one-- and the one which comes closest to perfection of all the relationships considered in this study. There is union between Edouard and Olivier, transitory, but fruitful. Within the context of the double, the context of finding oneself through union with another human being of the same sex, Les Faux-Monnayeurs gives the most complete and successful picture.

Marcel Proust, André Gide and Jean Genet are the three writers who took the sporadically-used uranian motif and raised it to a place of prominence in twentieth-century literature. Because of them inversion became a subject

possessing serious literary value. In their use of this theme, Gide is the classicist, Proust the realist, Genet the romanticist. It was Proust, not Zola, who painted the fresco of the homosexual sub-culture. It was he who depicted the homosexual of different ages and various milieux; his analysis was both social and psychological. It is perhaps unfortunate that he had a "parti pris", but his final picture is ultimately a neutral one, no more negative than his portrait of heterosexuality.

Gide and Genet worked on smaller canvases. Gide's paintings are always sober, well-outlined, and lack any sensual appeal. Descriptive elements are absent as is any love which comes solely from the heart; rather is there what Pierre-Quint calls the "dépoétisation de l'amour"[7]. Gide's self-appointed role as the defender of natural and classical Greek love was never reflected in any of his fictional works; there is no militant homosexual protagonist, no Ménalque of inversion. Yet it is not surprising: the question of when and how to publish Corydon was carefully and systematically thought out. And there was always Madeleine, who remained Gide's ideal love and, at the same time, a real presence in his life. Because she was there, Gide was never forced to plunge into the lower depths of

inversion. Consequently his homosexual characters do not move us as profoundly as do those of Proust or Genet. There is always control, never deep anguish.

If Gide is the Poussin of homosexual literature, Genet is its Delacroix. As Delacroix used paint itself, Genet used physical sensuality to evoke a response which he willfully wished to be shocking. One is either repulsed or enthralled by his novels; there is no "juste milieu". It is a narrow homosexual world that Genet paints, but it is always colorful and exotic. Moreover, his characters are in a constant and compulsive search for their pure essences, via the road of extreme existential action. Both love and degradation must be untarnished. All three authors searched for their own meaning through their writings, but with Genet and his characters the quest becomes frantic. "The only ambition of Genet's protagonists is to be seen or to see themselves in that dazzling light conferred by self-realization."[3]

All three authors depicted a Bacchanalian scene in one of their works. We can immediately grasp their respective responses to the homosexual "condition humaine" by looking at them through the eyes of Dionysius. For Genet the romanticist, Riton finds glory and fulfillment

in the supreme love-death moment with Erik on the rooftops of Paris. For Gide the classicist, Edouard, on the contrary, is revolted by the orgiastic overtones of Passavant's party, takes Olivier away from it, and cares for him until he is well enough to develop in a sane and controlled manner. And for Proust the realist there is Charlus in his own brothel, chained to a bed and whipped by the hired Maurice. He wishes to reach a moment of ecstasy, but he cannot because Maurice is not wild enough. If Charlus desires his pure moment of sexual bliss, his young torturer is too real, not sadistic enough to give it to him. For Proust's homosexuals the hoped-for ideal is never reached because of the impingement of ever-present reality.

Neither Proust, Gide nor Genet produced a fictional work in which inversion was the center and only real concern, as it is in E. M. Forster's Maurice. None of the homosexual relationships in any of the works from Balzac to Genet reaches a pure and lasting apotheosis. There is no Achilles-Patroclus devotion beyond death, no powerful glorification of adult male comradeship as in Whitman. Nor is there any suggestion that homosexuality may be nothing but an aspect of an "omnisexuality" as Hesse, influenced by Eastern concepts, evoked in Steppenwolf.

For the French writer there is always the difference between one homosexual partner and the other, whether "man-woman" or "mentor-pupil". Whitman's equality is missing, as is Hesse's universality. If the taboo was broken, the basic duality was not. Might we not call this "the French position"? Is the lingering presence of this fundamental duality due to the Roman Catholic conception of man? Is it due to the great importance of man as a social being, so imbedded in French thought since the days of Versailles? Is it due to the pedestal on which woman was placed since the days of the troubadours? One can only speculate, but although the Church, the social mirrors and the feminine mystique were smashed during the course of the nineteenth century, they are perhaps so ingrained in the French "âme" that they cannot be entirely eradicated. It is with an Anglo-Saxon "soul" that Whitman, Forster and Hesse wrote. Gide's Protestant up-bringing and Green's American roots remove them more from the dualistic--good-evil, social man—solitary man, man-woman--concepts of Proust and Genet.

Yet the latter seduce us more. Gide's controlled and sober use of the uranian motif enables us to perceive and appreciate his ideal--but always calmly, from the

outside. Whether homosexuality is latent or blatant, Gide never calls upon us to make more than a mental response. We look upon uranism in Gide's work as we look upon the Hermes of Praxiteles--as beautiful, harmonious and controlled. But as admirers of classical form, we do not wish to reach out and touch it; we do not become involved.

Proust does not give us the choice. He draws us into his world subliminally. Caught at first by the beauty and lyrical mystery of the cosmos which is Combray, we are then led into the heart of homosexuality via the interlocking and dark corridors of masks, enigmatic eyes, concealments and disguises. If we taste the tea-soaked madeleine, we also inhale the pungent odor of the hawthorns behind which Charlus first stands, and we hear the cracking of whips as the baron lies chained in his House of Illusion. We follow him--and Mlle Vinteuil, Morel, Jupien, Vaugoubert, Saint-Loup and so many others--into that world of sickness which is homosexuality, but which also leads them, and us, to the absolute and life-giving beauty of Vinteuil's Septet. As Proust weaves the uranian motif into his tapestry, so does he weave us into the homosexual world. We are caught by the great fictional creation of Charlus; we cannot

reject him as an abnormality, we must accept him as a man. We see him as a quixotic hero and empathize with him in his tragedy. But it is precisely because of that tragedy that we ultimately must reject the "way of Charlus". Proust's use of the uranian motif grabs us and holds us for a time, but Marcel's "way" to creation and self-fulfillment surpasses the "way of Charlus". Charlus does finally fail and we are not tempted to follow in his wake.

It is Divine who seduces us completely and it is her creator who uses the uranian motif most seductively. Indeed it is initially more difficult to enter Genet's homosexual world than it is to enter Proust's. In his blending of homosexuality with heterosexuality Proust makes it easier to take the initial step. With Genet, however, it is almost a traumatic experience to bring oneself into the frenetic world of flamboyant drag queens, frozen male statue-figures and perverted adolescent thugs. Many refuse to enter this world of scatalogical ideals and inverted values. One does have the choice. Genet used the uranian motif not to entice us, but to shock us. But once the shock is overcome, the seduction begins. The religious aura of the queens and their gods, the homosexual gestures which become lyric poems, the quest for an absolute purity <u>via</u> an absolute physicality,

the plunge into hell and death which in turn leads to a rebirth with the saints in heaven--all are inseparable from inversion.

André Malraux wrote of love:

> ...ce n'était pas à l'homme qu'elle apportait son aide; c'était au fou, au monstre incomparable, préférable à tout, que tout être est pour soi-même et qu'il choie dans son coeur.[9]

In his homosexuality Riton is the fictional embodiment of this monster whom love succors. And, if Malraux is right, if we are all monsters to ourselves, Genet's re-invented love will bring help to us all.

Divine and Charlus tower above all the homosexual characters created in the twentieth century. Charlus is the homosexual hero, Divine the homosexual saint. With Proust we participate, but with Genet we are seduced. Just in accepting Genet's creations as living and viable characters, we have already made a greater effort than was necessary to accept Charlus. Once we have fallen under their spell, we are perhaps tempted to follow them--for we know that they do succeed. In contrast to Charlus' defeat, Riton's love is positive, as is Querelle's self-mastery and Divine's holiness. Seduction is a part of all sexuality; in seducing us by means of his use of the uranian motif, the artist Genet succeeds also. Perversion has become poetry.

NOTES

1. George Ross Ridge, The Hero in French Decadent Literature (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 127.

2. Edmond Buchet, Ecrivains intelligents du XXe siècle (Paris: Corrêa, 1945), p. 70.

3. Victor Hugo, Tristesse d'Olympio.

4. Robert Merle, Oscar Wilde (Paris: Hachette, 1948), p. 35.

5. See: Marc Daniel, Des dieux et des garçons (Paris: Arcadie, n.d.)

6. François Duyckaerts, La Formation du lien sexuel (Bruxelles: Charles Dessart, 1964), p. 222.

7. Léon Pierre-Quint, André Gide (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1952), p. 247.

8. Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theater (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 267.

9. André Malraux, La Condition humaine in Romans (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1947), p. 218-19.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary and other pertinent works by authors discussed in detail in this study.

Balzac, Honoré de. La Comédie humaine. 11 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1951-65. (Especially the following: Vol. II: Le Père Goriot; Vol. IV: Les Illusions perdues; Vol. V: La Fille aux yeux d'or and Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes; Vol. VI: Sarrazine; Vol. VII: Une Passion dans le désert.)

Baudelaire, Charles. Les Fleurs du mal. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1961.

Bourdet, Edouard. La Prisonnière. In Théâtre, tome I bis. Paris: Librairie Stock, 1960.

Genet, Jean. Journal du voleur. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.

_____. Oeuvres complètes. 3 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1951-53. Vol. II: Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs; Miracle de la rose; Vol. III: Pompes funèbres; Querelle de Brest.

Gide, André. Corydon. Paris: Gallimard, 1925.

_____. Journal 1889-1939. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1951.

_____. Journal 1939-1949; Souvenirs. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1954.

_____. Romans: récits et soties, oeuvres lyriques. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1958.

_____. Saül. In Théâtre. Paris: Gallimard, 1942.

Green, Julien. Chaque homme dans sa nuit. Paris: Plon, 1960.

_____. Journal (1928-1958). Paris: Plon, 1961.

_____. Oeuvres complètes. 9 vols. Paris: Plon, 1953-1960. Vol. III: L'Autre sommeil; Vol. IX: Sud.

Proust, Marcel. A la recherche du temps perdu. 3 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1954.

_____. "La Race maudite", in Contre Sainte-Beuve. Paris: Gallimard, 1954.

Rimbaud, Arthur. Une Saison en enfer. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1972.

II. Other important fictional works which make use of the uranian motif.

Cocteau, Jean. Le livre blanc. Paris: P. Morihien, 1953?.

Forster, E. M. Maurice. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971.

Gautier, Théophile. Mademoiselle de Maupin. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1955.

Louÿs, Pierre. Les Chansons de Bilitis. Paris: Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1901.

Mann, Thomas. Death in Venice. trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter. New York: Vintage Books, 1936.

Martin du Gard, Roger. Un Taciturne. Paris: Gallimard, 1932.

Mendès, Catulle. Méphistophéla. Paris: Dentu, 1890.

Montherlant, Henri de. La Ville dont le prince est un enfant. In Théâtre. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1954.

Peyrefitte, Roger. Les Amitiés particulières. Paris: Flammarion, 1945.

Plato. Phaedrus and Symposium. In The Dialogues of Plato. Vol. I. trans. B. Jowett. New York: Random House, 1920.

Rachilde. (Vallette, Marguerite). Monsieur Vénus. Paris: Flammarion, 1926.

Sachs, Maurice. Le Sabbat. Paris: Gallimard, 1960.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. L'Age de raison. Paris: Gallimard, 1945.

_____. Huis clos. In Théâtre, Tome I. Paris: Gallimard, 1947.

Whitman, Walt. "Calamus" poems in Leaves of Grass. New York: New American Library, 1958.

Wilde, Oscar. De profundis. New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1906.

III. Critical works which have been useful in preparing this dissertation.

A. On sexuality and homosexuality.

Carlier, F. Les Deux Prostitutions. Paris: Dentu, 1889.

Chevalier, Julien. Une Maladie de la personnalité: l'inversion sexuelle. Paris: Nason, 1893.

Duyckaerts, François. La Formation du lien sexuel. Bruxelles: Charles Dessart, 1964.

Freud, Sigmund. The Psychopathology of Everyday Life. ed. James Strachey. trans. Alan Tyson. New York: W. W. Norton, 1966.

_____. Sexuality and the Psychology of Love. Collected Papers. Vol. 8. ed. Philip Rief. New York: Collier, 1963.

_____. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. trans. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, 1962.

Hartwich, Alexander. Aberrations of Sexual Life: after the "Psychopathia Sexualis" of Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing. trans. A. V. Burbury. New York: Capricorn Books, 1962.

Jung, Carl G. (ed.) Man and His Symbols. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964.

Karlen, Arno. Sexuality and Homosexuality: A New View. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. Psychopathia Sexualis: A Medico-Forensic Study. trans. Harry E. Wedeck. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965.

Spiess, Camille. Pédérastie et homosexualité. Paris: H. Daragon, 1917.

Symonds, John Addington. Studies in Sexual Inversion. Privately printed, 1928.

Tardieu, A. A. Etude médico-légale sur les attentats aux moeurs. Paris: Baillière, 1857.

B. On nineteenth-century literature.

Bardèche, Maurice. Balzac, romancier. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. Balzac. trans. Henri Jourdan. Paris: Grasset, 1923.

Jullian, Philippe. Dreamers of Decadence. trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971.

Marceau, Felicien. Balzac et son monde. Paris: Gallimard, 1955.

Merle, Robert. Oscar Wilde. Paris: Hachette., 1948.

Richard, Noël. Le Mouvement décadent: dandys, esthètes et quintessants. Paris: Nizet, 1968.

Ridge, George Ross. The Hero in French Decadent Literature. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961.

Schilling, Bernard. The Hero as Failure: Balzac and the Rubempré Cycle. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

C. On Genet.

Bonnefoy, Claude. Genet. Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1965.

Coe, Richard N. The Vision of Jean Genet. New York: Grove Press, 1968.

Driver, Tom F. Jean Genet. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

Guicharnaud, Jacques. Modern French Theater. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Knapp, Bettina. Jean Genet. New York: Twayne, 1968.

Magnan, Jean-Marie. Essai sur Jean Genet. Paris: Seghers, 1966.

McMahon, Joseph H. The Imagination of Jean Genet. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. Saint Genet, comédien et martyr. Vol. I of Oeuvres complètes de Jean Genet. Paris: Gallimard, 1952.

Thody, Philip. Jean Genet: A Study of His Novels and Plays. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968.

D. On Gide.

Brée, Germaine. Gide. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963.

Delay, Jean. La Jeunesse d'André Gide. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1956-57.

Gide-Rouveyre. Correspondance: 1909-1951. Paris: Mercure de France, 1967.

Guérard, Albert. André Gide. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.

Hytier, Jean. André Gide. Alger: Charlot, 1938.

Ireland, G. W. André Gide: A Study of His Creative Writings. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Martin, Claude. André Gide par lui-même. Paris: Seuil, 1963.

McLaren, James C. The Theatre of André Gide: Evolution of a Moral Philosopher. New York: Octagon Books, 1971.

O'Brien, Justin. Portrait of André Gide: A Critical Biography. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953.

Painter, George D. André Gide: A Critical Biography. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

Pierre-Quint, Léon. André Gide. Paris: Librairie Stock, 1952.

Sachs, Maurice. André Gide. Paris: Donoël et Steele, 1936.

Watson-Williams, Helen. André Gide and the Greek Myths. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

E. On Green.

Burne, Glenn S. Julien Green. New York: Twayne, 1972.

Petit, Jacques. Julien Green. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1969.

Saint-Jean, Robert de. Julien Green par lui-même. Paris: Seuil, 1967.

Sémolué, Jean. Julien Green, ou l'obsession du mal. Paris: Centurion, 1964.

Stokes, Samuel. Julien Green and the Thorn of Puritanism. New York: King's Crown Press, 1955.

F. On Proust.

Brée, Germaine. Du temps perdu au temps retrouvé. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950.

Briand, Charles. Le Secret de Marcel Proust. Paris: H. Lefèbvre, 1950.

Bonnet, Henri. Le Progrès spirituel dans l'oeuvre de Marcel Proust. Tome I: Le Monde, l'amour et l'amitié. Paris: Vrin, 1946-49.

Celly, Raoul. Répertoire des thèmes de Marcel Proust. Paris: Gallimard, 1935.

Chardon, Pierre. Marcel Proust. Paris: Foucher, 194-.

DeLey, Herbert. Marcel Proust et le duc de Saint-Simon. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966.

François, Simone. Le Dandysme et Marcel Proust: de Brummell au Baron de Charlus. Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1956.

Gabory, Georges. Essai sur Marcel Proust. Paris: Le Livre, 1926.

Germain, André. Les Clés de Proust. Paris: Editions Sun, 194-.

Graham, Victor E. The Imagery of Proust. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.

Hindus, Milton. The Proustian Vision. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1954.

March, Harold. The Two Worlds of Marcel Proust. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1961.

Miller, Milton L. Nostalgia: A Psychoanalytic Study of Marcel Proust. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1956.

Moss, Howard. The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1962.

Nathan, Jacques. La Morale de Proust. Paris: Nizet, 1953.

Painter, George D. Proust: The Early Years. Boston: Little, Brown, 1959.

_____. Proust: The Later Years. Boston: Little, Brown, 1965.

Peyre, Henri. Marcel Proust. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.

Pierre-Quint, Léon. Marcel Proust: sa vie, son oeuvre. Paris: Sagittaire, 1946.

Riva, Raymond T. Marcel Proust: A Guide to the Main Recurrent Themes. New York: Exposition Press, 1965.

Seillière, Ernst Antoine. Marcel Proust. Paris: La Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1931.

Zéphir, Jacques. La Personnalité humaine dans l'oeuvre de Marcel Proust. Essai de psychologie littéraire. Paris: Minard, 1959.

G. Other works.

Anderson, Patrick, and Sutherland, Alistair (eds.) Eros: An Anthology of Male Friendship. New York: The Citadel Press, 1963.

Bataille, Georges. La Littérature et le mal. Paris: Gallimard, 1957.

Buchet, Edmond. Ecrivains intelligents du XXe siècle. Paris: Corrêa, 1945.

Butler's Lives of the Saints. New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1963.

Daniel, Marc. Des Dieux et des garçons. Paris: Arcadie, n.d.

Foster, Jeannette H. Sex Variant Women in Literature. London: Frederick Muller, 1958.

Fowlie, Wallace. Love in Literature: Studies in Symbolic Expression. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.

Jones, Robert Emmet. The Alienated Hero in Modern French Drama. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962.

Nazier, François. L'Anti-Corydon. Paris: Siècle, 1924.

Starobinski, Jean. L'Oeil vivant. Paris, Gallimard, 1961.

H. Articles.

Calas, André. "Marcel Proust est-il un renégat de l'homosexualité," Arcadie, XVIII (novembre, 1971), 484-87.

Laurent, Guy. "A propos de Proust," Arcadie, XVIII (novembre, 1971), 473-83.

LeSage, Laurent. "Proust and Gide, Lifelong Antagonists," Modern Language Journal, XXXVI (1952), 159-65.

Levin, Harry. "Proust, Gide, and the Sexes - II," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXV (1950), 648-52.

Peyre, Henri. "Andre Gide et les problèmes d'influence en littérature," Modern Language Notes, LVII (November, 1942), 558-67.