The Unknowable in Literature and Material Culture

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Essays in Honour of Clive Thomson

Edited by

Margot Irvine and Jeremy Worth

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PREFACE

CLIVE THOMSON

This collection of essays has been compiled in honour of Professor Clive Thomson, to recognise both the gift of his long career, and the significant roles he has played in the lives of his students, colleagues, and friends. Each author accepted the invitation to contribute with expressed joy and energetic commitment; this spirit has nourished what stands as a profound and dynamic collection of reflections on the "unknowable", as well as a sincere expression of gratitude and admiration for the volume's honoree, his teaching and his achievements.

Clive Thomson's students and colleagues speak appreciatively of his quiet and reflective mentorship, and of his steadfast collegiality. Robert Barsky, a close companion in Bakhtinian journeys, evokes in his chapter on "Friendship and the Dialogic Body" the authenticity and warmth of a man who "quietly inspires insight through his probing questions and calm demeanour", and whose students react to his somewhat enigmatic stillness by striving to "raise the level of their personal engagement with the material at hand".[1] Anyone who has had the privilege of exploring ideas in the company of Clive Thomson will recognise immediately, in Barsky's description of his quietude, an essential component of Clive's ability to be wholly present in his professional and personal interactions and, in friendship, to "receive the gift of the other".[2]

Raised with his siblings in Ontario's Bruce County, near the shores of Lake Huron, Clive retains strong connections to his roots there and in the United Kingdom. The interview with Jelena Jovicic which closes this volume evokes a childhood consciousness influenced by family history and his elders' experiences far from individual birthplaces: in 1944, two years before Clive first opened his eyes, his Canadian father's life was forever altered by the Normandy landings;[3] later that year, his

[1] See p.192 in the present volume.
[2] Ibid., p.194.
[3] See Clive Thomson, « Mes parents et la guerre. » in Philippe Artières, *Au Fond* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2016): 113-120.

mother left South East England for the farmlands of Southern Ontario, where her husband's ancestors had settled after leaving the north of England around 1860. Clive's sense of personal and collective identity is rooted in his precocious sense of human history, an awareness given signifying form by document, object, artifact, and spirit of place; his answers to Jelena Jovicic's interview questions speak of his early responses to all these presences, and of how these responses would evolve in adulthood. He has established further significant connections, since finishing secondary education, to the various places in which he has lived, studied, worked, and extensively travelled: Toronto, Kingston, London, and Guelph in Ontario; Paris, Perpignan, Nice, Aix-en-Provence, Marseille and other parts of his beloved France; many corners of the United Kingdom, including Woking and the University of Sheffield's Bakhtin Centre; his partner Ramon's homeland of the Philippines; Phan Thiet City, Vietnam, where in 2012-13 he volunteered as a consultant to help establish a community college student counselling centre under the WUSC "Leave for Change" program; Bergamo in Italy, Sao Paulo in Brazil and Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria, in which cities he spent time as a Visiting Professor. This list is representative, but incomplete without noting Clive's many cherished personal and collegial connections to universities and institutes in other parts of Canada, the United States and beyond, as well as conference- and colloquium-organizing activity in countries including France, Russia, India, Mexico, and Italy.

For all the international scope of his life and activity, then, Clive is far from unrooted or uprooted; he has quietly carried all these identity-forming connections with him whilst creating new ones, leaving his mark in countless valuable ways on the communities of which he has been part. Former colleagues and students who have experienced Clive's hospitality over the years will think of him in his homes, both in the city and in the countryside, surrounded by music (many know Clive's talents in that area), art, books, good food and (in the country) by happy animals, including a pot-bellied pig of impressive personality and Rabelaisian dimensions. Robert Barsky is far from alone in appreciating Clive's sincere conviviality, and all friends, associates, and students speak of his kindness and his concern for the welfare of others (human or otherwise). During his years in the French Studies department at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Clive served two terms as chair of the Greater Sydenham Lake Environmental Association in Frontenac County. In 1998, the year of his appointment to the Ordre des Palmes académiques and whilst serving as Chair of the Department of French at the University of Western Ontario, he began training as a psychoanalyst (a long-standing

calling, as his interview in this book describes) at the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis. In the years that followed, he devoted many hours to service as a psychotherapist at UWO's Student Psychotherapy Clinic, during which period he also taught seminars on psychoanalytic technique at the university, volunteered with the London Psychiatric Hospital and, in 2001, opened his own practice in Toronto, specialising in issues including sexual identity, anxiety, panic, and depression.

After taking his undergraduate degree at Trinity College, University of Toronto, Clive Thomson began his graduate studies in French Language and Literature, developing a focused interest in the life and novels of Émile Zola. Meeting Professor Henri Mitterand in 1970, he continued to develop his passion for the historical and documentary, applying the emerging literary approach of genetic criticism to the study of Zola's *Trois villes* and preparing, under Mitterand's supervision, the critical edition of *Paris* that he would defend as his doctoral thesis in 1977. Finishing his doctorate, he joined the group of researchers working under the editorship of Bard Bakker to prepare the ten-volume Presses de l'Université de Montréal/Éditions du CNRS edition of Zola's *Correspondance* (1978-1995), to which Clive contributed the biographical and historical chronologies for the first two volumes, also working alongside Colette Becker on the annotation of the letters themselves. A legion of presentations, articles, chapters, reviews, and projects on Zola, Naturalism, and nineteenth-century French literature have followed through the years of Clive's career.

Joining the French Studies department of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario as an Assistant Professor in 1978, Clive worked extensively over the coming years with the GROUPAR research collective, editing collections on parody published by the Toronto Semiotic Circle and Éditions Peter Lang. These included the proceedings of the Cerisy colloquium *Dire la parodie,* co-edited with Alain Pagès (Peter Lang, 1989). At the same time, Clive was contributing heavily to the development of Bakhtin studies, creating and editing the *Bakhtin Newsletter* in 1983 and publishing annotated bibliographic entries which would later be incorporated into the online bibliography compiled by the University of Sheffield's Bakhtin Centre. Also in 1983, he edited a special issue of *The University of Ottawa Quarterly* entitled "The Work of Mikhail Bakhtin"; this included a detailed annotated bibliography of Bakhtin Circle criticism in English and French, further developing the reach and influence of Bakhtin scholarship in the Western world. Since the 1980s, he has participated in and/or co-organised numerous Bakhtin conferences and colloquia in North and South America, Europe, the

Middle East and Asia; some of these are evoked elsewhere in this volume (Urbino, Cocoyoc, Cerisy-la-Salle). Clive has authored and contributed to countless Bakhtin collaborations, encyclopedia entries, articles, chapters, projects and volumes, including *Dialogues with Bakhtinian Theory* co-edited with Mykola Polyuha and Anthony Wall (Mestengo Press, 2012), and entries on Bakhtin and dialogism, with Wall and Thierry Belleguic, in the *Encycopaedia of Semiotics* (Oxford University Press, 1999) and the *Dictionary of Contemporary Criticism and Critical Terms* (University of Toronto Press, 1994). His articles on Bakhtin have appeared in numerous journals, including *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop,* and his chapters are to be found in conference proceedings, dossiers and collections including *Bakhtin, Carnival and Other Subjects*, edited by David Shepherd (Rodopi, 1993), and *Bakhtinski Sbornik,* edited by Vitalii Makhlin (Sbornik, 2004). During the 1990s, Clive developed his research interest in Michel Foucault, in relation to Bakhtin and to discourses surrounding subjectivity, power, prejudice, resistance, sexuality, gender, medicine and psychoanalysis. He has been much in demand as a speaker on these subjects, and a current monograph project focuses on how Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan influenced Foucault's ideas about literature.

In 1994, Clive left Queen's University to become Chair of the Department of French Studies at Western University, in those days the University of Western Ontario. He remained Chair for two terms, until 2003, and at Western until 2008, renewing and rebuilding a French Studies department which today ranks as one of Canada's finest for research, teaching and mentorship. It was at the end of his first term as Chair that he was appointed to the Ordre des Palmes académiques by the Jospin government, shortly before being promoted to Full Professor by the university. In 1999, he organised the 25th annual conference of the Nineteenth-Century French Studies association. The topic of "Turning Centuries" brought 160 specialists to London, Ontario, only the second time the conference was held outside the United States. In 2008 an external search led to his appointment as Director of the School of Languages and Literatures at the University of Guelph; here, too, he and his new colleagues overcame severe budgetary restrictions and all attendant hinderances to renew courses, create new programs, stimulate research, and make the SoLaL a recognised beacon of teaching and research excellence. Clive's successes in these administrative roles are the fruit of enormous effort and personal investment, bespeaking the deep and unstinting commitment for which he is known and for which his students, friends and colleagues are so grateful. Rare, moreover, are administrators who maintain their research and teaching activities as well as Clive has

done, or who understand as well as he does the vital bonds that link different professional roles within a university.

As a teacher and mentor, Clive Thomson applies fully his uncommon ability to listen to voices individual and multiple, an awareness and skill which likely drew him to Bakhtin, as much as were honed by his studies of the Russian scholar. His successes in the classroom have never dissuaded him from updating his teaching methods, rejecting the dogmatic, developing new components and embracing methods such as experiential learning. Always practical and as iconoclastic as circumstances require, Clive embodies for his students and mentees a spirit of balance, cooperation, exploration and creativity.

Subjectivity, questions of gender politics, gender identity, and sexual orientation have long been central presences in Clive's research, be these in relation to Zola and Naturalism, to Bakhtin and Foucault studies, to psychoanalysis, or to the subject of "unknowable", "transgressive", (auto-) censored and hidden archives, letters, diaries, and autobiographical accounts. The introduction to our volume which follows discusses Clive's most recent work on the history of homosexuality, notably his *Georges Hérelle: Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle"* (Le Félin, 2014), his reedition of Philippe Lejeune's 1987 text *Autobiographie et homosexualité en France au XIXe siècle* (Éditions la Sorbonne, 2017), and the 2017 *Fières archives* exhibition at the Mairie du 4ème arrondissement in Paris. This research originated with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Standard Research Grant that he held from 2006-2010 on the emergence of new sexualities in France between 1870-1900. All the subjects and questions to which Clive has dedicated his career are of extraordinary importance in the present western political climate, and in myriad different ways, his work has nourished the essays which follow. We are grateful for the opportunity to bring them together, and to offer them, with our thanks, to Clive Thomson.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to this book and we are grateful for their assistance and support. Our research assistants Aurora Cominetti and Meghan Snyder provided valuable help. Michael Rosenfeld graciously supplied us with the cover image from the Georges Saint-Paul family archives.

A number of colleagues and friends lent their support to this book project at various stages of its planning. We would like to thank Adelina Angusheva-Tihanov, David Burty, Frédéric Da Silva, Anne-Simone Dufief, Pierre-Jean Dufief, Ramon Jacob, Henri Mitterand, Larissa Sloutsky, Galin Tihanov and Iulian Toma.

INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE, DIALOGUE AND PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE UNKNOWABLE

As Colette Becker reminds us in the opening of her contribution to the present volume, literature has always been a space of inquiry about the unknowable. Perhaps no-one understood this better than Émile Zola, who explained to the *Association générale des étudiants* in 1893 that it is precisely in the space between doubt and scientific study that literature operates.[1] Literature's goal is to interpret unknown forces, to offer explanations for them, and to suggest answers, even if, at least initially, the solutions it proposes exist only in the realm of the imagination. This is one of the many important qualities that draw us to study literature, and to marvel at the creative understandings that it offers.

The idea of the "unknowable", the thread that links the contributions to this volume, is inspired by Clive Thomson's recent work on the history of homosexuality. Through it, he has shown that it is only since the middle of the nineteenth century that same-sex sexual practices have become an object of knowledge and study.[2] As such, his work traces the development of a discipline: how something "unknowable" and unspeakable, since no words yet existed adequately to describe it, became a subject that can be examined and debated. Clive Thomson's work demonstrates that this process occurs, at least in part, thanks to exchanges and dialogues between members of the scientific community (Alexandre Lacassagne, Georges Saint-Paul) and members of the literary community

[1] « Entre les vérités acquises par la science, qui dès lors sont inébranlables, et les vérités qu'elle arrachera demain à l'inconnu, pour les fixer à leur tour, il y a justement une marge indécise, le terrain du doute et de l'enquête, qui me paraît appartenir autant à la littérature qu'à la science. C'est là que nous pouvons aller en pionniers, faisant notre besogne de précurseurs, interprétant selon notre génie l'action des forces ignorées », Émile Zola, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris : Tchou, 1968), vol. XII, 681.

[2] Clive Thomson, Introduction, in *Fières Archives: Documents et images autobiographiques d'homosexuels "fin de siècle"* (Paris: Atlande, 2017), 15.

(Georges Hérelle, Marc-André Raffalovich, Émile Zola). One such example of exchange, which we see in Allan Curnew's study in this volume, is the poet Marc-André Raffalovich's contributions to Doctor Alexandre Lacassagne's journal, les *Archives d'anthropologie criminelle*, which becomes an important venue for research on the topic of homosexuality. Another is Doctor Georges Saint-Paul's collaboration with the novelist Émile Zola, on the publication of the "Roman d'un inverti-né". Finally, Philippe Lejeune highlights the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue in describing the work of Georges Hérelle. According to Lejeune, Hérelle practices a triple dialogue, bringing together his vast knowledge of medical writings on the topic of male homosexuality, his discussions with a group of friends who share their own practices and situations with him, and finally, an introspective dialogue with himself through an examination of his own feelings, knowledge and experience.[3]

That dialogue and exchange are crucial practices in the consolidation of knowledge is shown in much of Clive Thomson's academic writing (see, for example, *Dialogues with Bakhtinian Theory*, 2012; *Mikhail Bakhtine et la pensée dialogique*, 2005; *Dialogism and Cultural Criticism*, 1995) as well as in his ways of being (as a teacher, mentor, administrator, colleague and friend). Clive Thomson's academic career began with the close reading of Zola's novels and correspondence and returns frequently to the author of Les Rougon-Macquart and *Les Trois Villes*. Other important writers and thinkers have inspired Clive Thomson's inquiry into the understanding of that which remains hidden: those memories, secrets, "unknowable" and "unspeakable" experiences and truths of public and private human lives that are undocumented, unspoken or poorly understood. Like Zola's, their work is reflected in the contributions to this volume. First among them is Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theories of dialogism, the chronotope, and the multiple (the latter seen, in this volume, through the prism of André Belleau's interpretation) are central to many of its chapters, as is Bakhtin's fascination with creativity, of which Robert Barsky reminds us.

Our volume appears at a moment when the question of archives, as sources for the creation of new knowledge and in their relationship to power, has been brought to the fore in our discipline and is current in French and other national/international media. Clive Thomson's recent work suggests ways of engaging with the archive. His *Georges Hérelle: Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle"* (2014) sheds light on

[3] Philippe Lejeune, "Autobiographie et homosexualité en France au XIXe siècle," *Romantisme*, no. 56, (1987): 79.

the practice of an archivist, as well as making available an important repository of texts and documents for the study of homosexual culture in late nineteenth-century France. The *Fières archives* exhibition that he co-organised in 2017 at the Mairie du 4ème arrondissement in Paris was a first example of what might be collected if the *Mairie de Paris* brings to fruition its current plans to create a Centre for LGBTQ archives in Paris.[4] Equally noteworthy are the publication in 2017 of Michael Rosenfeld's *Confessions d'un homosexuel à Émile Zola* (the "first uncensored edition of the 'Roman d'un inverti-né'") resulting from research in the archives of Doctor Georges Saint-Paul, and the 2017 reedition of Philippe Lejeune's 1987 text *Autobiographie et homosexualité en France au XIXe siècle*, edited by Clive Thomson. All of the above provided inspiration and subject matter for the important conference that was held in May 2018 at the Université Jean Monnet Saint-Étienne, *L'« Amour qui n'ose pas dire son nom » : Comment s'écrivent les homosexualités en France au XIXe siècle ?*

The first section of this book, on fin de siècle sexual inversions, continues and develops such debates. Michael Finn's chapter, which opens this volume, compares the discursive forms that Marcel Proust, André Gide and Georges Hérelle adopt to explain homosexuality. Contrasting the staid form of the socratic dialogue adopted by Gide in *Corydon* with Hérelle's documentary self-questioning surveys and Proust's "essay" on homosexuality in *Sodome I*, Finn suggests that Proust's playful tone, punctuated with humour and irony, achieves a balance and breadth that is less evident in the writings of the other two. Allan Curnew's contribution traces the influence of poet Marc-André Raffalovich's "scientific" writings on sexual "inversion" among members of the fin-de-siècle scientific community, like the influential Doctor Saint-Paul. Brandon Carroll's contribution also takes as its subject early medical accounts of homosexuality. While these looked for physical signs of sexual orientation, Carroll shows, it was literature, and particularly autobiography, which encouraged readers to look for the psychological characteristics of homosexual behaviour. Carroll reads the *Roman d'un inverti-né*, a confession published as part of a medical treatise, to analyze the relationship between homosexuality and monstrosity in fin-de-siècle France. The final chapter in this section moves to a more recent fin-de-siècle. In it, Nigel Lezama argues that the origins of designer Rick Owens'

[4] Aurore Coulard, « La Mairie de Paris promet la création d'un centre d'archives LGBT en 2020, » *Libération*, (October 11, 2017), accessed June 14, 2019, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/10/11/la-mairie-de-paris-promet-la-creation-d-un-centre-d-archives-lgbt-en-2020_1602381.

"peephole" tunics, much discussed on fashion runways after they appeared in 2015, are to be found in the praxis of the nineteenth-century dandy.

Zola's interrogations of the unknown are the focus of the second section of our book, dealing with naturalist intimacies and public scandals. Colette Becker's chapter draws on Zola's *oeuvre* to show how the author attempted to explore the body and its uncontrollable impulses. Becker demonstrates the novelty of Zola's reading of the body as an archive, the repository of a stored knowledge which he attempts to uncover. Alain Pagès' chapter argues that the unknowable can also become an over-studied object, subjected to multiple analyses and interpretations, as was the Dreyfus Affair. Some contemporaries observed that the sale of novels decreased during this public scandal because the Affair itself contained so many literary elements, both suspenseful and compelling. Pagès analyzes some examples of the Affair's "literariness", such as the board game, le "jeu de l'oie", which was based on it. He observes that this game and the novels that were inspired by the Affair most often use it as an allegory, engaging the reader as an active player in the reconstruction of events.

The chapters in the third section of the book, "Body and Memory: Crises, Strategies, Thresholds of Representation", discuss questions of desire, memory, creativity and identity. Bertrand Bourgeois shows how Huysmans attempts to express desire through pictorial imagery, particularly in his evocation of gradations of the colour red. Desire, although ultimately inexpressible, is at least suggested through this technique in two of Huysmans' early poems, as well as in the later text, *En route* (1895). Colette Fellous uses another stylistic device in an attempt to capture the unknowable: the chronotope of the threshold. Tara Collington shows us that in Fellous' *Avenue de France* (2001), doorways, windows, stairwells, public squares and streets are all privileged sites which enable Fellous to reconstruct her family's past and the history of the Jewish community in Tunis. Adina Balint studies the process of literary creation in its attempts to express the unknowable. Drawing examples from the creative processes of Annie Ernaux, Catherine Mavrikakis and Nancy Huston, Balint shows how, for the three authors, reaching for the unknowable can represent a source of inspiration and creativity. In the next chapter, Anthony Wall uses Bakhtin's theory of the multiple, read through a lens furnished by essayist André Belleau, to offer a rich interpretative key for the enigmatic serial portraits of unnamed men and women painted by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761-1845). Finally, in studying Panormita's epigrammatic poetry in the *Hermaphroditus*, John Nassichuk highlights the obscene imagery used by the humanist in his attempt to create a space in which to research, invent and explore the limits of form, social conventions and behaviours.

We have titled the last section of our book "Convivial Dialogisms: Clive Thomson's 'Public Square'". It begins with a meditation by Robert Barsky on dialogism and friendship, which takes as its starting point the shared interest of Thomson and Barsky in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Barsky shows that the possibility of friendship exists in a place of "vulnerability and potentiality, a state of being betwixt and between, where the interstitial space between self and other provides the possibility of a bond for confession, self-representation, or friendship [… and for] productive engagement".[5] This is the space of Clive Thomson's 'Public Square': one that Robert Barsky, and indeed all the contributors to this volume, have been privileged to share. It seemed to us fitting, in a book that holds dialogue and exchange at its core, to close with an interview with our colleague conducted by Jelena Jovicic. Jovicic invites this book's honoree to reflect on the origins of his interests, and on the trajectory of his multi-faceted career as researcher, psychoanalyst, writer, university administrator and teacher.

It is our fond hope that these essays capture and convey some of the diverse interests of a colleague and friend whose qualities have touched all of the contributors to this volume.

[5] See p. 194 in the present volume.

I.

"FIN DE SIÈCLE" SEXUAL INVERSIONS

CHAPTER ONE

EMBODYING HOMOSEXUALITY: GIDE, PROUST AND GEORGES HÉRELLE

MICHAEL R. FINN

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century gay writers both minor and pivotal meditated about same-sex love and cast about trying to imagine an adequate vehicle in which to treat a subject that was to them sympathetic but to the reading public scabrous. Clive Thomson's edition of the voluminous and revealing archives of Georges Hérelle (1848-1935), titled significantly *Archéologue de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle"*, provides a variety of such fascinating material on homoeroticism written or recorded over a period that stretched from about 1870 till the 1930s. Even though he was some twenty years older than both André Gide and Marcel Proust, Hérelle was their contemporary in that he was writing about and collecting materials about homosexuality, in documentation that was largely never published, from his twenties right up until the 1930s. Hérelle's texts provide a broad canvas on which to foreground and differentiate the arguments and ideas of Proust and Gide. My essay has two objectives: to compare the positions of the three men on the nature of homosexual desire, that is, to some extent, their views on virility and femininity; and to assess the characteristics and potential impact of the discursive form they each chose to further their arguments and ideas. Before these, however, it is important to situate Gide, Proust and Hérelle with regard to the "official", that is, the medico-psychological views of homosexuality at the close of the nineteenth-century.

A medical climate

Each of the three writers we are dealing with was, to a greater or lesser extent, a creature of his time where the theorization of homosexuality was concerned. For example, a number of critics have seen in Proust's portrait of the baron de Charlus as a woman the adoption of the German Karl

Heinrich Ulrichs' 1860s theory of homosexuality as the presence of a female soul in the body of a man.[1] Roland Barthes was struck by such nineteenth-century propositions not only in Proust, but in Gide: "L'Homme et la Femme (contraires, on le sait, définis par Proust biologiquement, et non symboliquement; trait d'époque sans doute, puisque, pour réhabiliter l'homosexualité, Gide propose des histoires de pigeons et de chiens)".[2] There may be a whiff of disdain in this "pigeons and dogs" reference, for it seems clear that Barthes' early respect for Gide gave way to a fascination with Proust. Atmospherically, and here I agree with Barthes, a nineteenth-century sense of decline hangs heavily over the final volumes of *La Recherche*. Most visibly, there is the case of Charlus who goes downhill morally and physically; the inherited degeneracy of the aristocracy is said to be the root of his decline.[3] More broadly, however, one is struck by the virus-like expansion of homosexuality in Proust's latter volumes (Saint-Loup, Nissim Bernard, Vaugoubert, the prince de Guermantes, Mme Verdurin, etc.) in a movement that one inevitably senses as downward and fatalistic. Although Proust explained somewhat disingenuously to Gide that after *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, he was left with only the grotesque and the abject for *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, a reader cannot help but identify a residue of nineteenth-century degeneracy at work here.[4]

As we know, a kind of pathological pall hung over the question of non-conforming sexualities in the latter years of the nineteenth- and early decades of the twentieth-centuries. In 1882, Jean-Martin Charcot and Valentin Magnan provided their own highly visible incitement to other French psychiatrists interested in sexology and, incidentally, to novelists, with an article on homosexuality and what they called "other sexual perversions".[5] A year later, Paul Bonnetain published *Charlot s'amuse*, his

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[1] See, for example, Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 269.

[2] See Roland Barthes' article, "Une idée de recherche," in *Œuvres complètes*, 5 vols., ed. Éric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 2, 1218-21.

[3] Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1987-89), vol. 3, 556.

[4] Proust's comment to Gide is in André Gide, *Journal 1887-1925* (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1996-1997), 1126. I have developed the degeneracy argument in more detail in "Proust and Ambient Medico-Literary Homosexualities 1885-1922," *French Forum* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 49-64.

[5] "Inversion du sens génital," *Archives de neurologie, Revue des maladies nerveuses et mentales* III, no. 7 (1882) : 53-60, and "Inversion du sens génital et autres perversions sexuelles (suite) ", *Archives de neurologie, Revue des maladies nerveuses et mentales* IV, no. 12 (1882) : 296-322.

novel of the physical degeneration of a serial masturbator. Parts of his narrative consist of borrowings from handbooks of sexual perversions such as Dr. Paul Moreau's *Des aberrations du sens génésique* (1880).[6] Scores of other writers of fiction mined this seam of the perverted, often with direct reference to the medico-sexological.[7]

For *aliénistes* such as Benjamin Ball and Alexandre Cullere, homosexuality was simply a branch of madness, a permanent condition of mental unbalance.[8] The actual turn of the century may have brought some abatement in the chorus of studies on "degenerate" sexual behaviour, but it seems that the watchword of the medical community concerning same-sex love was still firm, if not categorical. In 1898 the Charcot protégé Charles Féré, Director of the Hôpital Bicêtre, expressed this all-encompassing judgement: "L'inversion sexuelle, l'attraction spontanée sensuelle, sentimentale ou intellectuelle pour un individu du même sexe est considérée par la plupart des médecins comme un stigmate de dégénérescence."[9]

In the case of all three gay men we are discussing, Proust, Gide and Hérelle, medicine and its judgements were a clear presence in their formative years. Did they greet these judgements with alarm, or make their peace with them? A medical anecdote related to André Gide is well known. Because of his all too evident preoccupation with masturbation, he was expelled at age nine from the École Alsacienne in Paris and made to visit a certain Dr. Paul Brouardel (who would later become Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris). At the end of the interview, Brouardel supposedly made clear that if Gide did not abandon his bad habits, castration was the cure, and he indicated, pointedly, a cache of Berber spears that he kept in his office.[10]

For his part, Marcel Proust was, of course, the son of a well-known doctor, Adrien Proust, famous for championing the idea of the *cordon sanitaire* that would protect Europe from diseases such as cholera.

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[6] See my article "Naturalisme, sexe et sexologie. Excès catastrophique ou fantaisie médicale? " *Les Cahiers Naturalistes* 85 (2011) : 117-133.

[7] For example: Paul Adam (*Chair molle*, lesbianism, prostitution), Henri d'Argis (*Sodome*, homosexuality; *Gomorrhe*, lesbianism), Jean-Louis Dubut de Laforest (*Le Gaga*, satyriasis, multiple perversions), René Maizeroy (*Deux amies*, lesbianism), Sophie Harley (*Satane* and *La Pieuvre*, bisexuality), Rachilde (*La Marquise de Sade*, sadism), Catulle Mendès (*Zo'har*, incest, *Méphistophéla* and *Lesbia*, lesbianism).

[8] Ball, *La Folie érotique* (Paris: Baillière, 1888); Cullerre, *Les Frontières de la folie* (Paris: Baillière, 1888).

[9] *Étude de la descendance des invertis* (Paris: Progrès Médical, 1898), 3.

[10] André Gide, *Si le grain ne meurt* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928/1947), 67-69.

But his teenaged son was also prone to self-pleasuring and, writing to a young friend, Marcel observes that that very morning his concerned father had begged him to stop masturbating for at least four days. The same letter records very probably the real reason for Adrien's request: Proust's parents had forbidden their son from seeing a fellow student, Jacques Bizet, the son of the composer, with whom Marcel seemed too close. An astonishingly direct letter from Marcel to his maternal grandfather demonstrates both Adrien's anxiety about his son's sexuality as well as Marcel's apparent ease in dealing with the question. He writes that he has urgent need of thirteen francs:

> Voici pourquoi. J'avais si besoin de voir une femme pour cesser mes mauvaises habitudes de masturbation que papa m'a donné 10 francs pour aller au bordel, mais 1º dans mon émotion j'ai cassé un vase de nuit, 3 francs 2º dans cette même émotion je n'ai pas pu baiser. Me voilà donc comme devant attendant à chaque heure davantage 10 francs pour me vider et en plus ces 3 francs de vase.[11]

Gide had maintained that he was not overly frightened by Brouardel's threat. Writing at age seventeen to Bizet, whom he adored, Proust wrote relaxedly that he considered two boys masturbating together as just as acceptable as heterosexual love.[12] Hérelle opines that masturbation is almost a hygienic necessity for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds, but, adopting a theory that is at complete odds with fin-de-siècle medical prejudice, he proposes the following: "La jouissance commune, avec exaltation d'amour, est beaucoup moins fatigante pour l'organisme et ne déprime pas les facultés intellectuelles et morales".[13]

The concern over adolescent male masturbation, and possible attendant homosexuality, like that anxiety surrounding the potential for lesbian behaviour fostered in convent-run *pensions*, was one of those panics that flourished in a period haunted by changing gender roles as women entered traditional male workplaces while France itself, unlike England or Germany, had to contend with very low, sometimes negative, birthrates.

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[11] Marcel Proust, *Correspondance*, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1993), XXI, 550-551.

[12] See Marcel Proust, *Écrits de jeunesse 1887-1895* (Institut Marcel Proust International, 1991), letter 4 (51-52) and letter 5 (57-58).

[13] Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 164.

We don't know of any auspicious medical encounters from Georges Hérelle's childhood and adolescence, but the medical library he developed, which would eventually hold 250 volumes, and the multiple medical references he makes in his writing, show how well he was informed about ambient sexual research. His "special collection" would include works on the history of prostitution, a novel titled *Un hermaphrodite* and a copy of Ambroise Tardieu's *Études medico-légales sur les attentats aux mœurs*, which contains a devastating if wholly exaggerated treatise on the abnormal physical attributes of "inverts", i.e., gay men who practise anal intercourse. Hérelle read the works of the major sex researchers of the day. In 1893 he is seen commenting on the French translation of *Die conträre Sexualempfindung* [sexual inversion] of Albert Moll.[14] He finds Westphals's view that gays are painfully aware of their abnormality incomplete; he is more impressed by the research of Krafft-Ebing who proposes that homosexuals are happy enough to be what they are, but are saddened by the social obstacles to their acceptance.[15]

But what of Hérelle's own homoerotic attractions as a teenager and late adolescent? A fascinating revelation of Clive Thomson's volume is that, among his infatuations during the years spent at Collège Sainte-Barbe and Lycée Louis-le-Grand, was a passionate attraction both for Paul Bourget and the latter's younger brother Félix.[16] Paul would of course become one of the most successful novelists of his day. His fiction would be admired for his supposed mastery of female psychology and sometimes derided for its obsession with adultery.

In the exchanges of correspondence archived in Troyes, we see a patronizing Paul Bourget rejecting Hérelle's point of view on homosexuality. The seventeen-year-old Bourget writes, "Ne dire que ce qu'il faut est s'abstenir de désirer les choses extérieures, –voilà le principe de la vraie morale, de celle des stoïciens […] point de plaisirs, point de superfluité […] Je t'engage très fortement à quitter cette vie molle et

[14] Philippe Lejeune, "Autobiographie et homosexualité en France au XIXe siècle," *Romantisme* 56 (1987) : 73-100, quoted in Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 38.
[15] Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 41; 156-57.
[16] In a wide-ranging article entitled " 'Les sentiments dont nous parlons' : La correspondance de Georges Hérelle," *Études françaises* 51.1 (2019) : 17-31, Clive Thomson explores further Hérelle's exchanges and relationships with Paul Bourget, his brother Félix and several other young men.

douce où tu sembles te complaire".[17] Well aware of Bourget's passionate attraction to two young men, Maurice Bouchor and Adrien Juvigny, Hérelle accuses his friend of hypocrisy: "Tu tâches de stupéfier les désirs de ton cœur devant l'immobile pensée du devoir." And the fact that Bourget's behaviour is posturing is projected in an outward austerity of manner that one senses exaggerated.[18] What we see in this whole episode is Hérelle's unabashed acceptance of his feelings. As Clive Thomson puts it, "Sa correspondance de ces années avec les frères Bourget, Paul et Félix, montre clairement qu'il accepte, comme une donnée sûre, et peut-être même avec une certaine sérénité, son attraction pour les garçons ".[19]

Desire: masculinity/femininity

At an immediate reading, the central point of contention that separates Proust and Gide with regard to homosexuality involves the structure of desire. For both writers the issue of virility is central, although the question obviously agitates Gide more than Proust. If Proust stresses the search for virility on the part of the queen-like baron de Charlus, it is because Charlus has an inner female nature that requires an adult male, "un homme fait". In the typology of homosexuality put forward by Gide, it is only and strictly the non-effeminate, virile male who represents the authentic, morally acceptable homosexual. For Charlus and for Gide's character Corydon, the desired object is a man, a mature one in the first case, an adolescent one in the second.

Hérelle's main preoccupation is love between men and adolescent boys, but he too, like Gide, though less often and less stridently, finds effeminacy in gays unpalatable. In one moment where personal feelings are bared he writes:

> Ceux qui sont " filles" en amour ont des instincts bas. Ceux qui aiment véritablement les enfants[20] sont des *hommes*, que les

[17] Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 77-78.

[18] Daniel Ridge of Vanderbilt University is preparing a volume of the letters between Bourget, Maurice Buchor, Adrien Juvigny and Hérelle. In spite of In spite of Bourget's protestations of the purity of his feelings for Juvigny, in 1887 he requested Hérelle to return his letters to Juvigny because they might compromise him if they fell into the wrong hands.

[19] Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 25.

[20] By which he clearly means not children but adolescent boys.

> mièvreries féminines dégoûtent, et qui pourtant sont épris de la délicatesse, jointe à la force, de l'élégance dans l'énergie, etc. C'est mon type de beauté.[21]

For his part, Proust is certain that this professed desire for the virile has a different meaning. Casting about for the most appropriate terminology for homoerotic love, Proust opts for "inverti" over "tante" and "homosexuel". Why? His reason would have been especially unpalatable for Gide, since for Proust, there is no such thing as a homosexual: "Les homosexuels mettent leur point d'honneur à n'être pas des invertis […] Si masculine que puisse être l'apparence de la tante, son goût de virilité proviendrait d'une féminité foncière, fût-elle dissimulée. Un homosexuel ce serait ce que prétend être, ce que de bonne foi s'imagine être, un inverti".[22] Thus Gide, Hérelle with him, and no doubt Proust himself, would in fact have a basically feminine nature.

Another gay man, Roland Barthes, frames the conundrum of virile/feminine in a different way, adding a nuance to Proust's position, but still with a very tight focus on the meaning of desire: "Dans tout homme qui parle l'absence de l'autre, *du féminin* se déclare: cet homme qui attend et qui en souffre, est miraculeusement féminisé. Un homme n'est pas féminisé parce qu'il est inverti, mais parce qu'il est amoureux."[23] (Let us observe that, in one reading of this text, Barthes seems perilously close to declaring that femininity has an essence and that that essence is a kind of sorrowful expectancy.) Given that Gide's writing served as a literary and moral guide to the young Roland Barthes, the latter's comment above can be read as a direct challenge to Gide's idea that the true homosexual has only virile feelings. Naomi Segal similarly identifies in Gide an ideological movement to establish "the principle of the masculinization of desire and the feminization of need".[24] But Gide appears to be fighting himself on the issue of effeminacy. Reflecting on his brusque treatment of Alexis B., his fiancée's brother, Corydon problematizes somewhat his own position on the effeminate when he says,

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[21] Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 237.
[22] Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1987-89), vol. 3, 955.
[23] Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 20.
[24] Segal, *André Gide: Pederasty and Pedagogy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 87.

"Je lui parlai sévèrement […] avec mépris outré pour ce que j'appelais efféminement, qui n'était que l'expression naturelle de sa tendresse".[25]

And so, is tenderness indistinguishable from the feminine or from the effeminate? Hérelle notes, thoughtfully, that the adolescents he and his fellow pederasts admire are, in a sense, hermaphrodites.[26] Desire and no doubt tenderness are multi-directional in them because their sexuality is not fully defined: "La vérité est que le plus grand nombre des garçons de quinze à dix-huit ans n'a encore aucune vocation décidée […] Il n'y a le plus souvent en eux qu'un vague désir de volupté, […] peu importe que les lèvres qui les embrassent soient d'un homme ou d'une femme".[27] And in a comment about the boy-culture of ancient Greece but which was certainly applicable to his own time, Hérelle noted that because beautiful young adolescents were idolized, they sometimes developed the coquettish, capricious behaviour of a female.[28] Paul Bourget, passionately attached to young male friends but attempting to keep his love chaste, pictured his personal conflict in the form of a perverse gender-attraction mix-up: "Sans doute [l'amour des enfants] correspond à un besoin de l'âme mais cela même prouve sa monstruosité, parce que l'on aime avant tout dans l'enfant ce qu'il y a de gracieux, de féminin."[29]

In a separate text Hérelle defines what he likes in a young male by way of a contrast between female and male voices:

> Pour ma part, je déteste cette voix féminine presque autant qu'une voix rauque et gutturale. J'aime une prononciation douce mais d'un bon timbre et pas trop haute; les inflexions exagérées, chantantes, me paraissent toujours une affectation ridicule, une mollesse déplaisante: je veux que mon aimé soit un garçon et non pas une fille. Ce qui me déplaît dans la parole de la femme, ce je ne sais quoi de vaniteusement gracieux, cette pose pour la douceur, pour la passion, pour la bonté, etc., m'agace. Je veux que la voix de l'aimé exprime un caractère jeunement viril, c'est-à-dire quelque chose de souple et de fort, d'alerte et d'aimable, sans langueur, sans cajolerie, etc.[30]

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[25] André Gide, *Corydon* (Paris: Gallimard [Folio], 1924/2012), 25-26.
[26] Georges Hérelle, *Archéologie de l'inversion sexuelle "fin de siècle*", ed. Clive Thomson (Paris: Le Félin, 2014), 132.
[27] Ibid., 178.
[28] Ibid., 350.
[29] Letter of 21 March 1870 (Bourget was nineteen years old) to Georges Hérelle.
[30] Ibid., 150-151.

At an early point in Gide's dialogue, Corydon appears to be broadly accepting of variations in the sexual world. The range of attitudes and practices in homosexual relationships is perfectly comparable to those within heterosexuality, he says, from abnegation and platonism to vice and sadism.[31] But later in the text, Corydon makes a distinction between "normal" homosexuals and "inverts", the latter term somewhat opaque because "inversion" was and is used by many as a generic term for homosexuality.[32] In Gide's parlance the word seems usually to mean strictly penetrative sex with a man. As the critic Michael Lucey has put it, Corydon "attaches shame to certain forms of desire in order to free others from the same shame" and in so doing potentially demolishes what he is attempting to build.[33]

In spite, then, of the nominal acceptance of infinite variety, whole categories of gay men are anathemized by Gide. In *Corydon* itself, he makes a hostile reference, in remarks related to Proust's gay portraits, to "les cas d'inversion, d'efféminement, de sodomie".[34] Expanding on this in his *Journal*, he sets out three categories of homosexuals, that is, pederasts, sodomites and inverts.[35] He defines the sodomite anodinely enough as "celui dont le désir s'adresse aux hommes faits". There would seem to be no reason to condemn this group of men except that the word "sodomy" hangs over their nomenclature. He asserts that these three groups detest each other: "la différence entre eux est telle qu'ils éprouvent un profond dégoût pour les autres".[36] The level of emotion in this text surprises: why such heat? Is it simply Gide's disgust that is directed at men who play a female role in their relationship (obviously, this would include the passive partner in sodomy)?

Does Hérelle, for his part, ever broach the subject of physical sodomy? His analyses seem to bear strictly on men's love for younger men. There is one particular text in Latin which mentions, somewhat

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[31] André Gide, *Corydon* (Paris: Gallimard [Folio], 1924/2012), 29.

[32] Corydon says, "Et vous comprenez, je l'espère, ce que par 'inverti' je veux dire." Do we understand? Hérelle uses the term "inversion" regularly in a universal sense, avoiding "uranisme" and only later adopting "homosexualité". In his delightful article "Une idée de recherche" Barthes invokes the term "inversion" not only to refer (obliquely) to Proust's homosexuality but to characterize Proust's somewhat maniacal technique of presenting an initial apparent reality followed by a reversal that reveals the truth.

[33] See Lucey, *Gide's Bent: Sexuality, Politics, Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 71, 89.

[34] André Gide, *Corydon* (Paris: Gallimard [Folio], 1924/2012), 8, note.

[35] André Gide, *Journal 1887-1925* (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1996-1997), 1092.

[36] Ibid.

ambivalently, "two ways to receive pleasure and two ways to give it". One suspects that he is speaking of masturbation and oral sex. If one follows the reasoning of Proust's most reliable biographer, it would seem that Proust's sexual life was miserable and stunted, reduced to masturbation sometimes heightened by sadistic acts (the infamous pricking of mice or rats with pins).[37]

In conversing with Proust, Gide realizes that other gay men may not share his antipathies: "Et je comprends enfin que ce que nous trouvons ignoble, objet de rire et de dégoût ne lui paraît pas, à lui, si repoussant".[38] And yet, there is ambiguity on Proust's part as well. Exaggerated female behaviour in a man can summon up ferocious images in the Proustian text. Though there are well anchored, positive character traits that serve as compensation for Charlus' "depravity", for other, junior queens, Proust's text affords no quarter:

> Il faut avouer que chez certains de ces nouveaux venus, la femme n'est pas seulement intérieurement unie à l'homme, mais hideusement visible, agités qu'ils sont dans un spasme d'hystérique, par un rire aigu qui convulse leurs genoux et leurs mains, ne ressemblant pas plus au commun des hommes que ces singes à l'œil mélancolique et cerné, aux pieds prenants, qui revêtent le smoking et portent une cravate noire.[39]

It is the "polluted" image of a physical encounter featuring passivity on one side that derails Gide. By exhibiting unassertive, "female" behaviour, inverts exhibit, he writes, moral or intellectual corruption.[40] And yet, if they are being true to their nature, which Corydon, Proust and Hérelle see

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[37] See Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust. Biographie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 2, 320-25. Gide mentions the "enhancers" ("adjuvants)" which Proust required for orgasm, in Gide, *Souvenirs et voyages*, ed. Pierre Masson (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 2001), 1051.

[38] André Gide, *Journal 1887-1925* (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1996-1997), 1126.

[39] Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1987-89), vol. 3, 21.

[40] See André Gide, *Journal 1887-1925* (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1996-1997), 1092. Gide even extends his aversion to those men in heterosexual relationships who are timid or "semi-impotent" and thus play a more passive role with their female partners. These men merit the designation "lesbian" (Ibid., 1093). Current-day criticism has taken up this idea. See Thaïs Morgan, "Male Lesbian Bodies: The Construction of Alternative Masculinities in Courbet, Baudelaire, and Swinburne," *Genders* 15 (1992): 48-49. Naomi Schor applies the term to Flaubert in "Male Lesbianism," *GLQ* 7, no. 3 (2001): 391-99.

as innate, where is the corruption? If Proust appears more inclusive and less judgemental than Gide on the question of homosexual categories, we should not overlook the feeling of malaise brought on in the final volumes of *La Recherche* by the sheer numbers of characters whose true gay colours are revealed.

The enmity Gide felt for Proust was experienced on several levels. Their disagreement over first-person narration was a painful sticking point, as the excerpt that follows will confirm. Of course, in spite of the fact that Oscar Wilde had said to Gide, "N'écrivez plus jamais JE", Gide was indignant at Proust's insistence that one could say anything as long as one avoided the first person. It is this Gidian obsession with sincerity that is on full display when he encounters a pungent portrait of Charlus and of younger effeminate gays in the December 1921 issue of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Here is his diary entry:

> J'ai lu les dernières pages de Proust […] avec, d'abord, un sursaut d'indignation. Connaissant ce qu'il pense, ce qu'il est, il m'est difficile de voir là autre chose qu'une feinte, qu'un désir de se protéger, qu'un camouflage on ne peut plus habile, car il ne peut être de l'avantage de personne de le dénoncer. Bien plus: cette offense à la vérité risque de plaire à tous: aux hétérosexuels dont elle justifie les préventions et flatte les répugnances; aux autres, qui profiteront de l'alibi et de leur peu de ressemblance avec ceux-là qu'il portraiture. Bref, la lâcheté générale aidant, je ne connais aucun écrit qui, plus que le *Sodome* de Proust, soit capable d'enfoncer l'opinion dans l'erreur.[41]

The offence to truth? For Gide there are in fact multiple offences here. The portrait of Charlus as a mannered, vulnerable queen is hurtfully precise, yet bordering on the caricatural. It is also a cover for the portraitist's own closeted sexuality. How dare Proust snicker at his character's foibles; this is a ruse designed to put his reader off the track. What is worse is that the portrait plays to the ignorance and prejudices of the heterosexual observer, confirming him in the belief that gays are effeminate. An auxiliary offence is that some gay men readers will take solace in the portrait to reaffirm that

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[41] See André Gide, *Journal 1887-1925* (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1996-1997), 1143. The text which so upset Gide is the final three pages of an excerpt from *Sodome et Gomorrhe* 2, titled "En train jusqu'à la Raspelière", that appeared in the 7 December 1921 issue of the journal. See *NRF*, 17 (1921), 672-75 and also Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1987-89) vol. 3, 21 and 300-301.