ANDRE GIDE: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

GIDE'S PORTRAYAL OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

October, 1969

MASTER OF ARTS (1969)
(Romance Languages)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Gide's Portrayal of Marriage and Family Life.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: iv, 128

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This is an analysis of various aspects of marital and family relationships represented in a selection of André Gide's principal prose works.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the aid and advice of Dr. E. Knight in the preparation of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

In Les Nourritures Terrestres of 1897 Gide's famous exclamation "Familles, je vous hais!" is a focal point, since the institution of the family--simply by the fact that it is an institution--runs counter to the central doctrine of this lyrical call to personal liberation. But throughout his fictional works all aspects of family life receive wider and more sustained criticism from Gide than the mere fact that the family is conventional and confining by its very nature. Gide resorts again and again to marriage and family life as a stage on which to dramatize his ideas and to portray his attitude toward humanity. As often as he employs a family setting or a marital situation, Gide rarely deviates from a pessimistic attitude in regard to these institutions; and behind the overwhelmingly critical intellectual opinion that becomes evident on the subject there is always the suggestion that he is hinting at a deep and emotional personal dissatisfaction with his own experiences of marriage and family life.

There are, however, more than shadowy hints in regard to this very prevalent Gidian theme. Description of the family and the roles of its various members is as complete in Les Faux-Monnayeurs as it is burlesque in Les Caves du Vatican. Few praiseworthy traits and even fewer failings of the husband, wife, son and daughter escape Gide's description.

In earlier works such as Les Cahiers d'André Walter, L'Immoraliste and La Porte Etroite, Gide presents a detailed portrayal of the delicate and even rarefied problems of unusually sensitive and intellectualized newlywed couples and of similar couples on the brink of establishing an engagement. Here biographical details are conspicuous, in direct contrast to the infinitely more objective and critical attitude which Gide displays in the later works which deal quite exclusively with family problems, the trilogy L'Ecole des Femmes, Robert et Geneviève.

Thus over some fifty years of literary treatment of these themes there is a change in attitude from quite obvious personal involvement to an approach of objective and ironic examination; but what Gide strictly maintains in portraying marital situations is a use of a narrow social and economic milieu. It is his own wealthy social milieu of the learned and artistic professions that Gide describes; and he employs this social setting to create both a detailed description of human character and a weighty condemnation of this influential social class. This narrow range of observation tends to produce a concentrated examination of a very conventional family situation, that of the patriarchal family that is--especially to outward appearances--both stable and exemplary. If Gide toys with such a radical social idea as the maternal family in which the identity of the father is either unknown or of no importance, it would seem to be as a point of ironic

contrast to the atmosphere of strictly regulated paternity that characterizes a patriarchal system. The possible establishment of such a maternal family is described rather briefly in Geneviève and Gide gives something of a concrete example with the case of Lafcadio's upbringing in Les Caves du Vatican; but he rather quickly establishes the identity of Lafcadio's father, putting the illegitimate son squarely in the midst of Gide's accustomed setting of middle-class families.

These are, of course, individual cases and Gide occupies himself with such individual descriptions rather than with general or abstract theorizing about the nature of family life. But a general pattern of family life emerges in any case, since the patriarcahl families of Gide's fiction reach back at least into the nineteenth century for their solid and indeed rigid origins. In this setting the father would, for economic reasons, wish to have paternity strictly established and regulated in order to have the satisfaction of passing his considerable wealth to an unquestionalby legitimate heir. Thus, as in preceding centuries, every repressive measure possible would be justified to ensure the suitability of the wives and daughters as pure, chaste breeding stock and the suitability of the sons as the eventual receivers and enhancers of the patrimony.

A product of such a background, Gide's personal upbringing reflected such a repressive system, but in his case

in a strictly matriarchal setting. Not a conventional son, he was to become a less than conventional husband and a wholly unconventional father. Gide was clearly at odds with the milieu of his birth and this most atypical of candidates for bourgeois patriarchy was bound to be intrigued by his personal situation. With the potential, though obviously not the inclination, to become a middle-class patriarch, he assumed sufficient of the responsibilities and way of life of his class to keep himself solidly within it; and at the same time as an artist yearning for personal freedom he was in a privileged position to observe and expose in detail the artificial sexual attitudes, convenient religious interdictions and generally stifling social patterns of middle-class family life. For many generations these values had been manipulated either through innocent folly or through conscious hypocrisy in order to enforce the spiritual repression necessary to maintain the patriarchal family; but Gide had come of age in a time when the many psychological and intellectual results of such hypocritical manipulation had become too obvious to ignore. Gide was to portray an era that witnessed if not a disintegration then at least a growingly influential dissatisfaction with the false values of such a system.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND TO GIDE'S FICTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Léon Pierre-Quint opens his analysis of Gide's life and work by stating that: "Entre l'oeuvre et la vie de Gide, les rapports sont plus étroits, plus dépendants que chez d'autres essayistes. Les propositions de Gide sont éclairées constamment par sa vie, l'auteur, par son évolution".[1] And in comparing Gide's fiction with the many biographical and autobiographical works concerning him, the reader must inevitably feel a jolt of recognition at incidents that are recounted. For some enigmatic and even bizarre occurrence in Gide's fictional writing is suddenly seen to have been nothing less than a direct recounting of an event from the author's own life or from the life of someone very closely connected with him; and the incident is often so patently autobiographical that the reader feels assured that this is more than a possible clue to account for the ideas represented, and that he has in fact found an incontestably reliable key to unlock both the complexity and the ambiguity of the author's fictional writings. But in drawing conclusions based on the relationship between Gide's life and his fiction, one is immediate-

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[1] L. Pierre-Quint, André Gide (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1952), p. 1.

ly forced to deal with the fact that Gide underplays and often reverses or omits many of the key influences which had affected him as a person. If, for example, one decides that Michel of L'Immoraliste is the illustration of a personal tendency of Gide's own that is dramatized and exaggerated in order to carry it to an extreme conclusion, one must also take into account key differences. Gide has Michel's mother die when he was fifteen years old, and there is every indication that the influence of the mother was to be discounted, while Gide's own personal life could never be adeqately understood if the maternal influence were discounted. Similarly, the complete lack of rebellion against maternal authority which is a feature of Les Cahiers d'André Walter is quite different from the mood of Gide himself at a comparable age. One sees in André Walter, no doubt, another tendency of the author himself that is explored and then carried to a final extreme. Gide gives the simple explanation that "ce qui manque à chacun de mes héros, que j'ai taillés dans ma chair même, c'est ce peu de bon sens qui me retient de pousser aussi loin qu'eux leurs folies".[2] Gide thus admits that his characters will often reflect quite directly his own personal problems, but their drama will not necessarily be his own. As problematic an element in his own life as his

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[2]Gide, Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs (39th ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p. 81.

marriage was no less dramatic than much of what appeared in his own fiction; but the direction which the drama took was not necessarily the same. Michel and Marceline set off on their wedding trip looking very much like André and Madeleine Gide. The seeds of their problem are quite identical, but slowly their histories separate and very slowly, even imperceptibly, the fictional problem takes a dramatic turn that veers off into a neatly delineated tragedy that is quite different from that which occurred in Gide's own life. By the end of the work, the moral questions that have been raised and explored take on a dimension far greater than the details of autobiography which are scattered, often subtly changed, throughout the narrative; and if the reader wishes to see a portrait of Gide's failings in the picture drawn of Michel, he has largely been fooled by Gide himself, who has spread the tantalizingly authentic autobiographical clues throughout the history of Michel's career in immoralism.

It is interesting that Pierre-Quint opens his study of Gide by drawing the reader's attention to the unique relationship between art and life that can be seen in Gide's works, because when he analyses Gide's view of the family and education in a succeeding chapter, he does so quite strictly from the point of view of the author's fictional work. In contrast with this approach is the second chapter of Max Marchand's book Le Complexe Pédagogique et Didactique d'André Gide.[3]

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[3](Oran: Société Anonyme des Papeteries et Imprimeries

This second chapter is entitled "L'Education du couple conjugal André Gide et Emmanuèle", and by using the actual name of the author and the fictional name of his fiancée and wife as it appears in the novels and the Journals, Marchand would appear to indicate that he is exploring the nature and character of Gide himself, as Gide reveals himself in his approach to the purely fictional fiancées and wives of his works. But both sides of each question in Gide's "art ambigu" and "pédagogie équivoque"[4] tend to be presented and explored simultaneously in the fictional works, and this characteristically two-sided Gidian approach is comparable to similar qualities in the autobiographical works. One might imagine a complete picture of Gide's views on marriage would thus be obtained, but in the opening sentences of his book Marchand admits the seeming impossibility of unmasking an André Gide, and in his very opening sentence he suggests he finds it equally impossible to approach such an author without stating, as an understood principle apparently, reservations and even bias in regard to Gide and his influence:

> Est-il nécessaire de préciser que cet ouvrage n'est pas né d'une admiration aveugle pour André Gide? Parler de son complexe pédagogique, c'est déjà suggérer que le pédagogue chez lui se cache

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L. Foque, 1954).

[4]Marchand, dedication page.

> derrière l'artiste, le professeur derrière le romancier, le sermonneur et le redresseur de torts derrière le poète, c'est marcher sur la trace de ceux qui, à l'exemple de Gabriel Brunet, dans un récent numéro de "Quo Vadis?", voudraient soulever, les divers masques de l'écrivain ambigu.[5]

Recognizing these arguments regarding Gide's complexity, it would seem that a consistent and complete picture of marriage is not to be gained simply because Gide represented similar marital situations in both fictional and autobiographical forms. In 1902 Michel of L'Immoraliste, for example, shows an impatient exasperation with his wife Marceline for her timidity and her lack of a spirit of adventure; in 1947, in Et nunc manet in te, Gide expresses the same exasperation toward his wife Madeleine for a similar fearfulness and for a related bent toward self-sacrifice. Is one thus to see a portrait of Gide in that of Michel? Germaine Brée makes the comment:

> It is more than likely that Gide's fictional works disclose more of his real personality than do his Journals. . . .But, unlike his more directly autobiographical books, his fictional works are free from personal beatification.6

And Brée adds further:

> Another obvious road to the misunderstanding of Gide is the widespread idea that his works are nothing but thinly disguised auto-

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[5]Marchand, pages preceding Introduction.

[6]Gide (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 13-14.

> biography. . . .To seek in all Gide's works the "psychology of André Gide" is a dangerous exercise and a rather useless one. Like a conjurer, one extracts from the hat the rabbit carefully furnished for that purpose by oneself.7

And the conjuring trick which Brée calls such comparisons is often designed to condemn Gide. What Gide writes in Et nunc manet in te, his autobiographical work regarding Madeleine, can be compared to a fictional account of marriage in order to illustrate a rather monstrous awareness on Gide's part of the suffering which he was causing his wife; and yet when Brée speaks of the "personal beatification" to be found in Gide's autobiographical work, no better example could be cited than Et nunc manet in te, in which Gide would appear to be giving a self-justification completely at the expense of his wife's memory, a condemnation little diluted by the closing comments of praise and protestations of devotion. The essential point of Jean Schlumberger's Madeleine et André Gide, leur vrai visage would seem to be, in the main, a refutation of Gide's portrayal of Madeleine in the 1947 book. If Gide had not falsified this portrait of their life together, he had at least treated the subject of his marriage in much the same spirit as he had approached his fiction. Germaine Brée characterizes this approach as follows:

> 'We must carry our ideas to the very end,' Gide's hero had said in Marshlands, a Goethean principle; to the very end, Gide

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[7] Brée, pp. 16-17.

> would say, but not in life: in literature. Art allows what life, quite reasonably, according to Gide, cannot allow. Each of the diverse voices he heard in himself, carried to the end prepares the Gidian récit. Their coexistence prepares the Gidian drama and defines the very strangeness of Gide's own curious personality.[8]

It might thus be argued that Gide had given an extreme view of his own marriage, or rather of the aspects of this marriage which constituted his marital drama. And if he did omit a description of the many happy and even blissful years of his marriage, as Schlumberger maintains and indeed documents from many witnesses, then he did so to emphasize and extend the importance of the unhappier side of his marriage; for there is little doubt that Gide's attitude toward marriage and family life and the portrayal these themes received in his fiction was equally, if not more, pessimistic than that which appeared in Et nunc manet in te. But one can easily speculate that the peculiarities of Gide's own marital situation fascinated him so much that he was inspired to treat the subject of marriage and family life because of this fascination. For this marriage in 1895 was more a continuation than a beginning of a family situation that had been with Gide from his earliest childhood, a situation that is difficult to understand as being anything but undesirable.

G. D. Painter, however, gives this interpretation of the married life of André and Madeleine Gide:

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[8] Brée, p. 76

> Gide's wife had replaced his mother as a symbol of the role of restraint and spiritual virtue to which he needed always to be able to return, and without which his other pole, of liberation, joy and perversion, would have lacked all meaning.9

Thus Gide is described as being driven from one extreme to another both in his life and in his literary work. But the point that Gide's mother and his wife represented a similar stability in his life raises the question as to the exact nature of this similarity; for if one recognizes the fact that Gide's mother was the focus of repression against which Gide eventually rebelled when in his early twenties, one can wonder why he would wish, and indeed by passionately eager, to marry someone who represented a similar influence.

Gide's mother appears to have represented a repressive authority in his life but at the same time have felt a strong inadequacy in regard to her own accomplishments. Jean Delay describes her psychological orientation thus:

> . . .la défiance de soi et un grand besoin d'être rassurée se cachaient, comme il arrive souvent, sous un masque autoritaire. La jeune fille timide qui "dédaignait" le monde et les "partis" dissimulait sans doute sous couvert de dédain une appréhension au seuil de la vie, une sorte de peur de vivre.10

And Delay further suggests that such a person quite naturally will turn to restraints as a means of finding security, and that

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[9] André Gide: A Critical Biography (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), p. 29.

[10] La Jeunesse d'André Gide (3rd ed., Paris: Gallimard,

Juliette Gide not only did this, but found the process so salutary that she would quite naturally--indeed as a sign of love for her son--lead him in the path of such restraints. Delay explains:

> Son inquiétude même la poussait vers une soumission de plus en plus étroite aux règles de la morale, et elle devenait d'autant plus rigoriste ou conformiste qu'elle ne se libérait de sa défiance intérieure que par une confiance systématique en des obligations imposées. Elle mettait dans l'obéissance absolue à la loi son besoin de grandeur mais aussi de sécurité, et trouvait cette contrainte si salutaire qu'elle voulut en faire pleinement bénéficier son fils.11

Thus the child is given the role of trainee within the family, and it can be seen that Delay's description of the maternal influence puts it in as favourable a light as can reasonably be managed; for Gide would seem to have been forced to rebel against such a family atmosphere. This was an atmosphere shared with his mother and an Anna Shackleton, a Scottish, Protestant spinster who was, if anything, less severe a puritan than Mme Gide, but who nevertheless fitted into the restrained household only too naturally and was not apparently a significantly tempering influence on that of Gide's mother.

But if Gide as a grown man finally rebelled against the way of life that had been imposed on him by his mother,

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1956), I, 95-96.

[11]Delay, pp. 95-96.

this is not to say that he genuinely rejected the kind of puritanical nineteenth-century woman of which she was typical. At the age of twenty-six, he could bitterly inform his mother that "des lettres comme tes quatre dernières qui malheureusement, de toi, ne m'étonnent plus beaucoup me font prévoir, si je me marie, un véritable enfer conjugal", and that "si j'ai des enfants, qu'ils ne soient bien mal et bien peu élevés, par l'horreur que l'excès de ton système me donne pour toute éducation 'qui n'a pas pour but de se supprimer'";[12] but this kind of belated rebellion, designed to wound as much as anything else, was an indication that Gide wished finally to stop his mother's meddling in his life. He gives no indication of repudiating the feminine values she represented, and nothing makes this clearer than his determination to marry Madeleine Rondeaux, the cousin he had known since childhood.

The marriage took place only after the death of Gide's mother, but her opposition to the marriage had been lifted before her death, although it was clear to her that André was not an ideal match for Madeleine and indeed was not necessarily suited to marriage at all. Gide himself was no doubt sincere in believing that he could contract and carry out a successful marriage. He was well aware of the fact of his homosexuality, and had shown the good faith of seeking

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[12] J. Delay, La Jeunesse d'André Gide (6th ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1957), II, 475.

medical advice, which was disastrous in the encouragement it gave him that he would be capable of leading a normal married life. He himself would, in 1928, give a young man in a similar situation rather the contrary advice,[13] but only after seeing the result of thirty-three years of his own marriage; but even then there is little doubt that Gide saw his marriage as a spiritual rather than a physical union, and that he believed, especially as a young man, that respectable family women such as his wife and fiancée fitted into such a spiritual relationship because of their inherent qualities. The incorruptible, inaccessible fiancée would became the chaste wife, who was to be admired for her spiritual and moral qualities. If Gide foresaw problems at the time of his marriage regarding the physical realities of sex, there is little doubt that they would seem of secondary importance to him. Such realities were obviously overshadowed by the life of spiritual comradeship and mutual admiration which he envisaged with Madeleine, a life that was in many respects a continuation of the adolescence they had shared.

Madeleine Rondeaux' unwillingness to enter into an engagement with her cousin might be taken as an indication

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[13]Letter to unknown correspondent: 17 April, 1928, quoted in J. O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 267:

> . . .you may be sure that in psychology there are nothing but individual cases and that, in a case like yours, too hasty generalization may

that she was somewhat more in tune with the realities of marriage. Equally influential in her unwillingness would be the various family pressures which were against the match along with the fact that André was manifestly not a stable, and thus one imagines, marriagable type. But on the other hand Madeleine Rondeaux also appears to have been entering marriage on an unrealistic, or at least highly spiritualized, basis. A few days after the announcement of her engagement, for example, she could write, "Cher André, ne suis-je pas ton amie, ta soeur, ta fiancée? Soeur paraîtrait peut-être bien ridicule à d'autres--à mes yeux il répond très bien aussi à ce que je suis, ce que je sens. . . .Je n'ai pas peur de la mort, mais j'ai peur du mariage".[14] What could be more admirable for a young man like Gide than a wife-to-be who indicates her purety by the timidity of sentiments such as these? André Gide could, at this time in his life, be filled with great hope by the though of his coming marriage; Jean Delay comments that "Gide vécut les jours qui précédèrent son mariage dans une grande espérance, celle-là même qui animait jadis André Walter".[15]

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lead to the most serious errors.
With this reservation, allow me to consider as most unwise a matrimonial experiment which, if it fails, will surely compromise a woman's happiness and very probably yours as well if your heart is in the right place. . . .

[14]Delay, II, 509-510.

[15]Ibid., II, 557.

And yet this reference to Les Cahiers d'André Walter is not as ominous as might first appear; because although André Walter's marriage plans are doomed and his hope will eventually turn to madness, the marital plans and subsequent marriage of Gide himself were not so fated, despite the undoubted similarities between his attitude and that of André Walter. If Les Cahiers d'André Walter appear to be written in a nineteenth-century atmosphere of illusion in regard to marriage, there is little doubt that Gide himself relished the thought of a life which would embody the spiritual values that such an illusion represented. The potentially difficult physical aspects of his marital life would no doubt have seemed of rather secondary importance to him, since he believed himself about to marry a woman of such a spiritualized nature as was the Madeleine Rondeaux who existed in his eyes. Such a union not based on physical desire was clearly to Gide's liking, and the pessimism of his portrayal of married life may reflect the obvious potential for unhappiness and even tragedy which he saw in his own marriage rather than any "conjugal hell" which he himself actually experienced. He would be held in check by such a moral woman as Madeleine Rondeaux was as his mother Juliette Gide had been; and this restraining influence would produce the best in him.[16] The unhappy marriages, which are in the main the essential ingredient of

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[16]See entry in Gide's Journal, 9 September, 1940.

his portrayal of family life, may reflect his wife's sentiments a great deal more than his own, for all the tone of personal complaint which Gide injects into such a work as Et nunc manet in te. Madeleine Gide, on the other hand, maintained a strict literary silence regarding her feelings toward the marriage. She left no written account, for example, of the anguish which inspired her--after some twenty years of marriage--to burn Gide's large collection of letters to her; but this gesture of destroying the record of their emotional attachment is a clear indication of her disillusionment and unhappiness.

To a great extent Gide's unconsummated marriage retained, at least in his eyes, much of the pure, spiritualized qualities of his adolescent days with Madeleine Rondeaux. His fictional portrayal of marriage and family life, on the other hand, moves from the emotional atmosphere of illusion and half-understood sexual torment of Les Cahiers d'André Walter, in which many of Gide's own adolescent problems were intimately involved, to the more coolly intellectual considerations regarding feminine emancipation found in L'Ecole des Femmes Robert, and Geneviève. The background to the drama of Gide's own marital life is clearly reflected in André Walter, as it continued to be in such works as L'Immoraliste and La Porte Etroite; but later works which touch on the subject of married life tended gradually to leave behind speculation on such spiritual considerations as concerned him in a deep and

and troubling way. The realities of child-rearing, of adultery committed by rebellious wives, and of actual revolt by wives and daughters were clearly never to be part of Gide's own life. Even in the midst of the inevitable disillusions of his marriage Gide, and perhaps even his wife, could maintain the unsullied qualities of spiritual fidelity that the less spiritualized characters of his fiction could never really know.

If Les Cahiers d'André Walter of 1891 represented a high point of personal involvement for Gide, then it might be argued that a book like Geneviève of 1936 and the two other books which form a trilogy on the difficulties of married life illustrate infinitely fewer of his own life's problems. The situation of having a young emancipated woman wishing to give birth to a child outside marriage was one which he experienced personally, since his own daughter had been born to such a woman some thirteen years prior to the publication of Geneviève; but such an autobiographical detail is more coincidental than central to his treatment of the drama of the work. Indeed it might be suggested that these three books outline Gide's intellectual point of view regarding marriage and fail to really dramatize any personal ingredients whatsoever, unless it is an underlying pessimism and sadness which he saw as common to his own marriage and those of the middle-aged and middle-class families he observed around him. For if Gide experienced great delight in family life, as close friends

so often reported in regard to his life at Cuverville and elsewhere, he did not choose to present such an experience in his fictional portrayal of the institution.

No matter what Gide's personal orientation within marriage, one is struck by the fact that his characters share in common the fact that they are deeply involved in family considerations. For all that they may recognize the shortcomings of the institution, they show little if any desire to sidestep the issue, even if they are manifestly unsuited to be involved in the problems of a marriage. Even the illegitimate sons, those important Gidian characters who stand outside family encumbrances in theory, are quickly drawn into family dramas. The women of Gide's fiction, typically portrayed as self-sacrificing pawns in the marital situation, must always come to terms with the problematic aspects of their roles as wives and mothers, even if they are in revolt against the traditional family situation depicted in L'Ecole des Femmes; and such diverse types of men are involved in marriage as the sensitive adolescent André Walter, who would have entered into a marriage if his traumas had not prevented it, and the obtuse, middle-aged Oscar Molinier of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, who is as fatuously complacent in marriage as in everything else. Few, if any, of the important characters in that part of Gide's fiction which is concerned with the present age--as opposed to Biblical or mythical themes--act out their dramas at a great distance from the

centre of a difficult family situation.

CHAPTER II

LES CAHIERS D'ANDRE WALTER AND LA PORTE ETROITE: THE INCORRUPTIBLE FIANCEE

Although adolescent sexual frustration could not have been seen as an original literary theme by Gide in 1891, he nonetheless had great hopes for the literary success of his treatment of the theme. Indeed, he was convinced that his message was so timely that he wised to see André Walter published with the greatest possible haste, in order to insure that no other author could reach the public with his message in advance of what he envisaged as a most auspicious literary début. The public, however, was most likely to be struck by similarities with preceding literary treatments of the themes in André Walter rather than by the subtle nuances of difference which fascinated Gide himself and which absorbed his attention so completely. Only his own literary coterie gave the limited edition copies of the text politely favourable praise, recognizing the fine qualities of various literary touches of style, mood and personal sincerity.

The general reading public was a different matter, and the ordinary edition prepared for them was recovered by Gide himself and hastily reduced to pulp, in order to get the evidence of his disappointment out of the way as quickly as possible. A brilliant popular success was clearly not to be

the fate of André Walter.

Such hopes for public recognition on Gide's part were not by any means based on purely wishful thinking, because some one hundred and twenty years prior to the publishing of André Walter Goethe had published Die Leiden des Jungen Werther and had produced a literary sensation that became a continent-wide social phenomenon. Gide might have hoped for a similar reaction but it seems predictable, at least in retrospect, that he was producing a very subtle and indeed--for purposes of public reaction--a very small variation on themes of a well-worn romantic tradition.

The violence and intimacy of the confessions in Goethe's epistolary novel are not greatly changed in the heartfelt, more scholarly and more ethereal style of Gide's journal form. Furthermore, Goethe provides his readers with a violent, if amazingly lingering, suicide as the climax of Werther's emotional and sexual torments; and in 1774 the public, not only of Germany but of all Europe, was moved to produce parodies, denunciations, defences and even actual suicides under the influence of Werther's example.

But if there is a suspicious similarity between the very names Werther and Walter, there is also, on close examination, clear evidence that Gide had indeed transformed the tradition that Goethe had represented. The earnest nineteenth century separated the two works, and at no time was Gide's sincerity in producing André Walter put into the contrasting

light of scathing parodies of the original that even Goethe himself was capable of producing. Goethe could picture Werther and his love-object Lotte going serenely off to bed after the suicide attempt resulted in a singeing of the eyebrows and a little scratch that Lotte can amuse herself by bandaging. Goethe's narrative is, after all, the story of an unconsummated adulterous passion in which an overwrought young man is subjected to both his own passion and melancholy and the obvious teasing of a blatantly coquettish married woman. If there is significant literary subtlety in Werther's history, it tends to be centred around the question of whether or not he would have committed suicide if he had not met Lotte and the frustrations she represented. The public in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was, however, greatly taken by the degree of social, sexual and religious rebellion that Werther represented; and even if his death can be seen as a kind of retribution for his sins, he nevertheless inspires sympathy even as he is buried in unhallowed ground with no priest in attendance. Behind all of the details of Werthers Leiden is the basic and shocking fact that the public is made to sympathize with an irreligious and potentially adulterous social rebel.

Gide's André Walter is by no means such a rebel, and the twenty-two-year-old Gide was interested in exploring questions of a very refined type, while the twenty-five-year-old Goethe could see the literary potential in shocking the

public with the taboos he recognized with great shrewdness. In 1920 Gide could tell Roger Martin du Gard:

> Je l'avoue, il y a très peu de temps que j'ouvre enfin les yeux sur la vie, sur les êtres. . . .Jusqu'à la quarantaine, je puis dire que je ne me suis jamais soucié d'observer ce qui se passait autour de moi. La question religieuse et la question sexuelle m'absorbaient exclusivement: elles me semblaient insolubles. . . .[1]

If the problems he was exploring were so complex that they seemed virtually insoluble to him, they were equally likely to be sufficiently subtle as to leave the general public largely unmoved. It is clear that the public was not to be scandalized excessively by a young man's strictly Platonic love for the orphaned cousin raised in his family's house. But it is quite a different matter to have a young, handsome stranger come into town for no discernible purpose (although the reader knows that he is recovering from an unsuccessful love affair), and to have him drawn into an adulterous affair that would obviously ruin a fine example of family happiness. Consummation of Werther's sexual longings would not be socially acceptable, and indeed not even morally justifiable in view of the extremely happy home whose sanctity he would be invading.

Gide, on the other hand, depicts two young people who are contemplating engagement under the most regular of circumstances, unless a strict interdiction of consanguinity were

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[1] R. Martin du Gard, Notes sur André Gide, 1913-1951 (28th ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 29.

going to be emphasized. The barriers to their union are subtle and indeed are not fully understood even by this very intellectual and introspective couple, because they are as unable to reconcile the problems of love and sex as Gide had admitted himself to be. Their intellectual qualities are at least matched by their piety and together they read the Temptations of St. Anthony. They are inspired to see the desires and torments of the flesh conquered, and there is little doubt that they will be able to cope with similar problems in an equally successful manner.

But if these two wish to establish a family of their own, they will have to overcome a family influence that is ingrained beyond hope of expunging. The mother of André, the aunt of the piously named Emmanuèle, pronounces the interdiction and explains it to some extent, although the two young people are aware of the basic situation. They realize that they have come to call themselves brother and sister, and that this relationship has been regarded by the two of them as extremely salutary. They have prayed, studied and read together, and André piously sets aside any reading that he cannot embark upon along with Emmanuèle. Under such circumstances their attentions are tender but physically chaste, and it is on her deathbed that André's mother warns him that his feelings are only fraternal, and he listens to

this without rebellion, and is even pleased to indulge in the almost religious self-sacrifice. Emmanuèle and her actual fiancé kneel at the foot of the dying woman's bed, and André blesses his mother fervently because her deathbed interdiction has made possible the true union of the souls of himself and his idealized beloved.

André does not breathe a sigh of relief in these circumstances, but such a reaction is certainly hinted at in the mystical exaltation that he feels. It is André's notion that the three characters are mystically joined in experiencing the moral comfort of the virtuous situation; but the reader is not likely to be so involved in André's mysticism and faces the obvious fact that the third party, the corporeal fiancé, is an unknown "T. .". And indeed the reader knows very little about Emmanuèle, since presumably she has consented to marry "T. ." without a great deal of pressure that has come to anyone's attention. What is typical in much of Gide's portrayal of marital situations is introduced in this first book, and this is the detailed examination of the male partner's ideas and torments, with a rather shadowy and incomplete delineation of the woman's attitudes; and what has specifically been drawn to the reader's attention is André's attitude toward the physical side of his relationship with Emmanuèle.

Even if it is possible to reconcile André's longing for a monastic way of life with the contemplation of marriage

because of the piety and scholariness of his nature, his abnormal attitude toward a physical relationship becomes unmistakable and increasingly morbid. Both art and life disgust him because of their physical origins. He records in his journal:

> . . .Ou de la chair qui se déguise. On la trouve partout, l'impure! elle se revêt spécieusement.
>
> Certes, quand on songe à ce qui fait la poésie. . ., quelle poussée de désirs! et les nerfs si vibrants au charme des couleurs à cause d'un peu de fluide épars dans l'être; . . .ah! quelle prose! quelle sale prose au fond de tout cela.[2]

He feels "un écoeurement, oui jusqu'à la nausée, en regardant la vie, la vie qu'il fallait vivre" and adds "j'aime mieux mon rêve,--mon rêve!. . .";[3] and thus he shows that for him the impulses that he feels find their source in a kind of endocrinal secretion that poisons him like some gangrene.

Thus he is nauseated by the very origins of physical desire, and even develops elaborate phantasies about the corruption of the flesh. But he adds this well-known and enigmatic section to his journal:

> Dégager l'âme en donnant au corps ce qu'il demande! dis-tu;--et tu m'estimerais plus lorsque je l'aurais fait. . . .Mais, ami, il faudrait que le corps demande des choses possibles; si je lui donnais ce qu'il demande, tu crierais le premier au scandale;--et pour-

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[2]Gide, Les Cahiers d'André Walter (Oeuvres Complètes, Paris: N.R.F., n.d.), I, 44.

[3]Gide, André Walter, p. 46.

rais-je le satisfaire?[4]

This passage is not readily discernible as a reference to homosexual desires on the part of André, and is sufficiently ambiguous as to be little more than a speculative point of biographical interest in relationship to Gide himself. What is clear in the narrative is that André Walter is completely convinced that satisfaction of his physical longings cannot fit into the ideal notion of life that he has created in his mind. It should also be noted that nausea at fleshly pleasure occurs in the Cahier Blanc, when André is presumably still quite rational; it is in the Cahier Noir that his insanity finally overtakes him, and the reader sees the two striking dream-phantasies that are only recognized by André himself as inexplicable signs of his madness.

The first of these is a nightmare in which a beautiful woman is accompanied by a monkey. The monkey lifts the woman's skirt to reveal an empty, black void; the woman in turn grasps the hem of her dress and throws it over her face, turning herself inside out and enveloping herself in darkness.

This horrifying representation of a feminine vision fits within the context of André's growing madness. The reader is well aware that madness is involved at this point because André's book Allain has been successfully concluded with Allain's insanity. Madness is also seen as the explanation of

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[4]Gide, André Walter, p. 45.

of André's dreaming of beautiful young boys bathing and splashing who excite within him the desire to caress their cool, sun-tanned skin. These nightmarish torments are apparently not recounted by André in order to indicate feelings either of misogyny or of homosexuality. It is only natural to him that his morbid sensitivities in regard to the physical expression of his sexual desires should take on grotesque forms once his madness dominates him; and it should be noted that these visions and nightmares occur in the midst of a variety of semi-lucid entries that involve literature, music, and the Bible.

When André is overwhelmed by the suppression and warping of his physical instincts, Emmanuèle is left unscathed to enter married life. Her death is told to the reader in a brief footnote, and it is likely that André would picture her reactions a great deal differently than would his readers, because although he has never attempted a detailed description of her attitudes, he gives his readers to understand that her physical orientation within their relationship is, as a matter of course apparently, quite different from his own.

They have refrained from caressing presumably out of decency within the family situation. She is the orphan cousin under the protection and scrutiny of her benevolent aunt, a virtual mother to her whom she would not risk offending. Thus she too, like André, comes under a strong maternal interdiction which remains one of the unquestioned influences in their

lives. The two simply do not seem to imagine any opposition to the mother's wishes.

But André imagines that Emmanuèle has a strict attitude toward their physical relationship. She regards his playing of evocative romantic piano music as a kind of cowardice that he succumbs to as a means of enveloping the two of them in an emotional mood that they must not yield to physically. This is, however, largely his own interpretation of her true feelings, and his presentation of her reactions throughout the journal are made with the notion seemingly understood that, as a woman, her physical longings are inherently different from his own and that she is struggling to maintain the purity of a spiritual relationship while André wishes to introduce the corrupting element of physical satisfaction. When she does consent to marry, her actual feelings are once again not clearly expressed; and the deathbed betrothal scene is interpreted, at least by André himself, as an act of the most selfless obedience on Emmanuèle's part and as having nothing to do with the establishment of a marriage with a combination of spiritual and physical attraction. André can only muse that Emmanuèle was so innocent that she did not realize that the two of them were in fact in love; and he, no doubt, can readily imagine that she will suffer a kind of romantic pining away, that will result in her death. His own mind becomes too clouded to record any of this, and presumably the footnote reference to her death has been

provided by a literary executor. The male partner of the abortive beginnings of married life becomes entirely lost to reality, but perhaps no more lost to the realities of his situation with Emmanuèle than he was from the outset. Thus one partner that is too spiritualized in his outlook brings a possible engagement to result in his own madness and the death of the intended fiancée; another engagement, this time in La Porte Etroite, fails to come about because of moral rigidity on the part of the girl in question, Alissa.

This is not to claim, however, that La Porte Etroite is a re-working of the situation seen in André Walter, and in strictly biographical terms it would be tempting but undoubtedly quite erroneous to see André Walter as an exploration of Gide himself, while Alissa is a portrait of Madeleine Gide as she hesitated to become finally engaged to Gide. To say that the role of puritanical morality as a problematic element was transferred from André Walter to Alissa is to say in effect that Gide was really only exploring another side of his own character, perhaps as a literary means of seeing just exactly where his particular tendencies could theoretically lead. In retrospect, it is clear that Madeleine's puritanical ways were a fixed mode of life, and one not in fact likely to alter although the twenty-year-old Gide and indeed no one else could really know just how unalterable her pattern of life really was. It was of course Gide himself who was interested in continual change, liberation and self-examination

as a means of improvement and self-realization. Alissa is a portrait of Madeleine in one very important biographical respect, and that is that both she and Alissa had in their backgrounds the haunting guilt of their mother's marital infidelity, a guilt which reinforced a temperament that was admittedly very timid. But the nature of the pious fanaticism which is Alissa's ultimate fate are really the literary realization of a potential which Gide saw in his own character.

And it is not only Alissa Bucolin who is disturbed by Lucile Bucolin, the scarlet woman who practises the flagrant adultery that haunts her daughter's life, for she is also the Aunt Lucile of Jérôme, the male protagonist of this second story of an engagement that is fated to wither. He is filled with uneasiness, admiration, and especially terror by the presence of his aunt; and the similarity that he sees between Alissa and her mother is no less alarming to him than it is to Alissa herself. Jérôme is, in fact, very much the type of young man to be terrified by the aggressive and voluptuous Lucile, since he is the counterpart in passivity to the Emmanuèle of André Walter. The difference is that the passivity of Emmanuèle tends to be a quality that comes through by the fact that she is kept in the background of André's narrative, and is only interpreted through his reactions. The seemingly passive obedience to the dying mother of André is, in all likelihood, motivated by his own wishful interpretation of the marriage to which she consents.

Jérôme, on the other hand, is an extremely passive, and indeed timid, young man. He shares with André Walter the puritanical and pious qualities of a strict and repressive Protestant background, but he differs greatly in the lack of violence either in his actual existence or in the morbid phantasy life that he, unlike André, largely escapes. In fact Jérôme finds the severity of his family training a soothing influence, in that it has instilled in him a complete and calming self-control. The two cousins have been raised together for the most part along with Alissa's sister, Juliette and the younger brothers. Alissa is two years older than Jérôme, and is quieter and more sensible than the other children, and at no time does she inspire in Jérôme the physical torment that was at the root of André Walter's anguish. Jérôme admits quietly that "lorsque je devins d'âge à souffrir des plus précises inquiétudes de la chair, mon sentiment ne changea pas beaucoup de nature: je ne cherchai pas plus directement à posséder celle que, tout enfant, je prétendais seulement mériter".[5]

It is Alissa, however, who is the troubled half of this potential engaged couple. Jérôme maintains an idealistic love for her that is quite serene as he pictures her and himself as

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[5]Gide, La Porte Etroite, (95th ed., Paris: Mercure de France, 1932), p. 35.

as "tous deux nous avancions, vêtus de ces vêtements blancs dont nous parlait l'Apocalypse, nous tenant par la main et regardant un même but. . .".[6] He is also very amenable to being put off in his plans of securing Alissa's consent to become engaged; and unlike André Walter, he is not under the influences of his mother since she is too ill to take a firm stance in the matter, although she admits that it is as clear to her as to everyone else that Alissa is extremely hesitant. It is Alissa herself who sends him away, first to the Ecole Normale where he enjoys the retreat from the world, and then definitively after she severs all connection with him, leaving him to tell Abel Vautier who has secured an engagement with Juliette that he has never been happier than he was at this moment. Jérôme is perhaps convinced that something profoundly spiritual has occurred in Alissa's life that takes precedence over their marriage; or perhaps he is naturally willing to re-enter the state of mystical revery about their ideal union. Alissa, seemingly, is acting upon the hard facts of the situation.

Alissa has seen that Juliette is very much in love with Jérôme and Alissa convinces herself that she will sacrifice her own happiness for that of her sister. This does not occur, since Juliette finally not only does not become engaged to

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[6] Gide, La Porte Etroite, p. 31.

Jérôme, but rejects Abel and finally marries the vine-grower Teissières, an ugly, unrefined man who is quite outside the usual family circle, and immune to the spiritual considerations that plague the refined members of Jérôme's and Alissa's family. Alissa's sacrifice is therefore in vain since it does not aid her sister as would seem to have been the intention.

But if Alissa is confused as to her real intentions and motivations, Jérôme has been even more unaware of the real situation as he witnesses her going through her personal torments. As she analysed her feelings and actions in the journal which makes up the second-last chapter of the book she comes to the realization that her sacrifice of Jérôme's love in favour of devotion to God was motivated by fear of a marital situation and finally by her own vanity which had come to be fed by the spirit of self-sacrifice that she had learned to relish. Thus she had given up earthly happiness only to find that spiritual happiness was also ruined by the same side of her nature; and furthermore she had greatly jeopardized and perhaps permanently prevented the happiness of those closest to her. Thus her journal shows that she has been able to think through the actual nature of her actions.

Jérôme, on the other hand, really only sees what has happened when he reads the journal after her death. He was, apparently, genuinely unaware that she was very much in love with him, and secretly longed for him to presuade her to change her mind. He was equally unaware of her physical fear of sex,

and even upon reading the journal we imagine that he remains quite baffled as to the reason for this fear.[7] The influence of Alissa's mother is seen as a possibility, since it is upon hearing that Alissa's father notices a similarity between the mother and the daughter that Alissa becomes most disturbed. As in André Walter, sexual motivations can remain a mystery or can easily be misinterpreted not only by the reader, but also by the imperceptive characters themselves, especially as in the case of Jérôme when their very lack of awareness is an integral part of the unhappy turn of events. But the perceptive reader too is not given very much more than the largely baffled Jérôme upon which to form an assessment of Alissa's true feelings. There is, for example, no tendency to dwell upon details of physical revulsion on Alissa's part as there was with the infinitely more emotional André Walter. Also the reader is not given any further elaboration on the physical revulsion and fear that Lucile Bucolin had caused Jérôme as a youth when she reached inside his shirt and terrified him. Her role in both their lives is clearly announced at this point; but like her spiritual sister Isabelle of the novella of the same name, she remains in the background as a kind of female demon of the sensual life.

But the fact that Jérôme undergoes this childhood shock

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[7]See J. Guérard, André Gide (New York: Dutton, 1963), p. 121.

with his Aunt Lucile is an important clue to the story even though it is presented as an isolated incident, much as the childhood incident in Gide's own life was indeed an isolated although genuinely frightening and disturbing occurrence. Not only does the spectre of Lucile's nature influence the two main characters in their attitudes toward physical sex, but from the point of view of the narrative, she also shows that Jérôme is contemplating as spiritual a marital bond as was André Walter. An indication from this outside source is absolutely essential in gauging anything about Jérôme, since he is so lacking in aggressive qualities that he never displays enough initiative to indicate a personal preference or point of view.

It is precisely this passivity which is so essential to the tragic lack of success in bringing about the union of this sensitive pair. Jérôme is all but absurd in his willingness to step aside to allow Alissa to carry out her career of masochistic asceticism. Thus the incorruptible fiancée is left to work out her own destiny completely on her own terms by her passive partner. When, for example, Alissa displays the amethyst cross that is their secret signal for him to leave her and give up his engagement plans, he does so without a murmur or even, it seems, a second thought. She cannot restrain a certain amount of surprise at this, but apparently takes it as a kind of omen that she is to pursue her largely self-destructive inclinations. Through Alissa's journal, Jérôme and the reader

learn at the same time that she was secretly waiting for a firm and forceful declaration by Jérôme to enable her to renounce what eventually proved to be a fanatical resolution; but his extreme passivity allows her to continue her tragic course to its ultimate conclusion.

One small, and symbolic thing, that Jérôme refuses to do is to take her amethyst cross in order to present it to his first daughter. Instead, Alissa keeps this cross and is eventually buried with it, because Jérôme is unable to contemplate the initiation of another marital alliance. It is his goddaughter, the daughter of the long-married Juliette, who bears Alissa's name, some ten years after Alissa Bucolin's death. Jérôme has remained unmarried for these ten years, and states his intention to remain so when he visits the very domestic family of Juliette Teissières.

It is in the final chapter that this visit takes place, and a close examination of thie brief closing section of the book is a reminder that Juliette too has been portrayed with a great deal of subtlety, and A. J. Guérard describes this portrayal by saying that "in the shadows of both the story and the diary are Juliette's unhappy marriage and her unchanged love for Jérôme".[8] It might, however, be argued that what Gide

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[8]Guérard, p. 120.

has presented with Juliette's story is a contrasting vision of married life, one that turns out as successfully as Alissa's and Jérôme's was abortive, because Juliette's marriage is rather more conventional than unhappy, and this conventional quality might be seen as a virtual failure within the context of La Porte Etroite.

At the outset of the story, Juliette was younger and livelier than her sister Alissa, but she was equally involved in refined studies and spiritual exercises. The fact that she was attracted to Jérôme is no small yardstick of her nature, and her betrothal to the vine-grower of a virtually alien world is clearly to be seen as a minor tragedy. Her subsequent marriage, however, is only unhappy if the reader chooses to see it quite exclusively through the eyes of Jérôme, who imagines that Juliette retains the adolescent sensibilities with which he was so familiar. She is very much involved in the family business, to the extent of having her younger brother Robert enter this business and become part of her husband's commercial world. But Jérôme is quick to observe that literature and music no longer have any place in her life, and that she is completely taken up with child-bearing, some of it difficult, and a host of domestic chores. She has become the living picture of the bustling, stout and breathless Aunt Plantier whose Philistine approach to life had been so foreign to young Jérôme, and he cannot really bring himself to believe in her happiness under these circumstances and no

doubt makes a great deal of the ambiguous remarks that she addresses to him regarding the nature of hopeless love and how it can be extinguished by the daily round of ordinary life.

Jérôme's description of Juliette's married life tends to inject a bittersweet quality into it that might very well be merely his own reaction. Objectively, the marriage is successful, even blissful, although admittedly having little in it that is either spiritual or exciting. It is precisely the kind of marriage which produces heirs to carry on a successful family business, and in this regard the atavistic touch of having Juliette become like the Aunt Plantier of their youth can be seen as a significant point in Gide's portrayal of family life, and is in fact a fundamental criticism.[9]

The criticism would be centred around the fact that when Juliette is transformed by age and her very conventional married life, she does not become an individual in her own right, but a copy of someone else. The conventional marriage and conventional homelife reinforce one's natural, inborn inclinations and result in the unchanged family line that is, of course, a valued quality in bourgeois life. Gide, however, argues that this is a negative result, and that children

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[9]See Gide's Journals, Detached Pages, 1921. Also above in the section entitled "Les Faux-Monnayeurs: Natural and Unnatural Sons".

raised in these circumstances are necessarily warped according to their family traits from the very outset, and that a revolt involving too great a risk would be the only remedy. This is, presumably, the kind of upbringing which the young goddaughter of Jérôme, who is named Alissa, will receive in the home of Juliette and Edouard Tessières.[10]

Jérôme and Alissa, however, have been unsuccessful in establishing any type of marriage at all. Alissa had insisted that their true identity was to prefer happiness to holiness, and the two of them are of such refined sensibilities that they are indeed able to carry out this notion of their destiny as a kind of experiment in idealism, an experiment that was doomed never to end in anything as concrete as an actual marriage. As the story ends Jérôme is of course greatly saddened by his experience of ten years ago, but does not appear to see his and Alissa's story either as a negative example or as a cautionary tale upon which he will be inspired

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[10]The goddaughter who is deliberately named Alissa must, in some manner at least, project the story into the future, and Germaine Brée sees the new Alissa at the conclusion of the story as the continuation of what has been a story of complicated and subtle family connections, connections in which the individual members of the family are seemingly inevitably affected by those whom they resemble by natural hereditary factors. Brée gives this analysis:

> From the very beginning one senses within this rarefied atmosphere a disturbing element in the person of the one outsider in the Bucolin clan, Lucile Bucolin, Jerome's aunt, a Creole from Martinique. Although she disappears almost immediately, indirectly Lucile continues to affect the future fate of Jerome and Alissa.

to change the direction of his life. He is disinclined to embark upon a realistic married life in the foreseeable future, preferring to remain loyal to his idealized notion of his relationship with Alissa; and the story ends with Juliette quietly in tears as the two of them recall the events of ten years ago. The cause of her tears is enigmatic, and the reader can interpret them in any number of ways; but it can be speculated that, rational analysis to the contrary, it may very well be that in Jérôme's eyes it is he and not Juliette that has had the better part of the possibilities in a marital situation.

> In the first few pages, with almost imperceptible suggestions, Gide establishes a network of family ties and situations. Jerome is very much like his scholarly father. Alissa's sister, Juliette, who falls in love with Jerome, is the image of her Aunt Plantier. Alissa is very much like Jerome's own mother and yet resembles the wanton Lucile. Jerome's predicament of being loved by both Alissa and Juliette, mirrors that of his father who once hesitated between Aunt Plantier and the woman he eventually married. At the very end one wonders if, in one form or another, the story may not be re-enacted again by a new Alissa, the heroine's niece.

Brée, pp. 156-157.

CHAPTER III

L'IMMORALISTE AND LA SYMPHONIE PASTORALE: THE UNCONSULTED WIFE

When Gide published La Porte Etroite in 1909, he was returning to the theme of a troubled and eventually unsuccessful engagement long after having brought about his own engagement with Madeleine and also having composed the story of a new marriage, L'Immoraliste, which had appeared in 1902. It is not surprising that Gide should have felt that he was not completely written out on the theme of adolescent sexual torments, even some fourteen years after his marriage, since the same problems had neither been solved in his life nor in his literary works.

Justin O'Brien sees a confessional approach in the two books, and further sees a close literary connection between the two:

> . . .André Gide confesses himself in Alissa exactly as he had earlier confessed himself in Michel. The hero of L'Immoraliste represented one of the author's buds or dormant eyes isolated and brought to a monstrous flowering; similarly the heroine of La Porte Etroite personifies another of his latent possibilities. And in like manner Gide here carries that potentiality to the point of excess, thus purging himself of it. . . . .It has become traditional to admire La Porte Etroite at the expense of L'Immoraliste or vice versa, as if the technique were not the same in both. . . .Really the two novels ought to be published under a single cover

> in order to be read together as two aspects of the same problem.1

Thus it can be argued that L'Immoraliste can be read as a continuation of La Porte Etroite, the story of an ill-fated marriage that quite naturally follows that of an ill-fated engagement; and in making this connection, the influence of the respective family milieus, that are so very similar, is no small element in making the argument of a close relationship between the two books.

For if one accepts O'Brien's very reasonable idea that Gide's (and much other literary) writing is the fictional realization of potentialities that are hinted at in the lives of the writer and of others of his close acquaintance, one can account for some of the extreme and basically inexplicable features of L'Immoraliste, La Porte Etroite and even André Walter.

L'Immoraliste, for example, pictures a young man twenty-five years of age who embarks upon married life in order that he may please his father. As in André Walter, it is the dying wish of the parent that prompts the action of the dutiful child; but in the case of Gide's first work the reader is likely to accept this style of action rather more readily because it occurs in the midst of a great deal of emotional bewilderment that eventually is seen as having been

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[1] J. O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1953), p. 216.

the prelude to madness. André blesses his dying mother for having made the decision that should, in all good sense, have raised the greatest antagonism in him. But Michel of L'Immoraliste submits to parental authority with the same obedience, and this time with an almost careless willingness to automatically follow his father's wishes. And in neither book is there a great deal of effort spent in making clear whether the parent is overbearing, the child too dutiful, or whether it is a combination of the two. This element of obedience is rather taken for granted, and it might be pointed out that without this automatic obedience on the part of the child, the two stories could never have taken the extreme direction and have reached the extreme conclusion that occurs in both. In L'Immoraliste, Michel will eventually come to a fascinated interest in and attraction for the young king Athalaric who rebelled against his Latin education and the influence of his mother when he was a fifteen-year-old boy; such a rebellion is a clue to the reader that Michel might have had an entirely different marital career if such an instinct to rebellion had been present in his life.

In the case of La Porte Etroite there is an even more striking example of a passively obedient character in Jérôme. He submits not to a parent's wishes, but to those of Alissa, the intended fiancée; and this submission to what he conceives as the true wishes of the fiancée is made with the same readiness as apparent in André Walter's obedience to his mother.

These are clear examples of a deeply ingrained element in Gide's fictional representation of family life that was not carried to the same extreme in his own relationships with his mother; and that is the dutiful obedience to family wishes as a seeming matter of course.

But the fact that the marriage of Michel and Marceline is consented to on the apparently automatic basis of a conventional family duty makes one fact clear, and this is that their marriage is indeed purely a matter of convention. It is virtually an arranged marriage, not this time with a cousin but with a childhood friend known through mutual family acquaintanceship. Michel does, however, make it perfectly clear that he had not really known Marceline very well even as a child and the theme of a long-standing spiritual attachment that had grown up throughout childhood is not one that is developed in L'Immoraliste as it was eleven years earlier or was to be seven years later in La Porte Etroite. This kind of spiritualized attachment is rather far from conventional and is not readily comparable with that which Michel and Marceline are fated to endure. The two couples, first Emmanuèle and André Walter and second Alissa and Jérôme, had a great deal of emotional and spiritual background in their relationship; but this relationship became so refined that it could not face up to the stiff realities of the actual institution that society has created to contain such a relationship. In the case of Michel and Marceline one can speculate

that they are of a sufficiently refined temperament so as endure a similar fate; but in their case the social ritual is accomplished before the inner drama has a chance to begin; and if Michel and Marceline are spiritual cousins to the other two couples, it falls to them to endure the rigours of an actual marriage.

Why is it, then, that Michel should have embarked so eàsily on the course that had caused Jérôme and Alissa such hesitations? In at least one respect Michel is at an opposite extreme to Alissa, and that is that he does not foresee any problems to the marriage which has been arranged for him and Marceline. Michel is evidently very confident and trusting in regard to the arrangement that had been made for him. Rebelllion is the furthest thing from his mind, and he does not believe for a moment that he will not respond to the marital situation in the fashioned envisaged by his father, who is the real instigator of the marriage. Michel no doubt assumes that his attitude toward Marceline will be all that it should be, and that it will to the established pattern as a matter of course.

Michel himself explains that he did not know his wife very well, and that this did not at all distress him at the time of their marriage. He does not make it clear why he feels this lack of concern at starting a marriage on such a basis; and the reader is left to fill in any number of possibilities as to the reason for such an unusual

attitude.[2] The reasons that Michel gives are all centred around his father, who had wished his son provided with the sense of family security that had surrounded him up till this time. Michel had agreed to marry Marceline, whom the father had chosen for him, and the betrothal scene took place around the deathbed, a scene that La Porte Etroite and André Walter had both made familiar to the reader. As in Mauriac's Génitrix, the children are left behind after death to carry within them the wishes of their parents like a ghost which they cannot escape;[3] and indeed Marceline would not wish to escape the family influence as it is thus represented.

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[2]See Gide, L'Immoraliste (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 29.

[3]R. D. Laing quotes Sartre in regard to this style of parental influence. Sartre gives the example of a primitive tribal community which inculcates in a child the notion that he is the living incarnation of an ancestor, and continues:

> What barbarism! Take a living child, sew him up in a dead man's skin, and he will stifle in such senile childhood with no occupation save to reproduce the avuncular gestures, with no hope save to poison future childhoods after his own death. No wonder, after that, if he speaks of himself with the greatest precautions, half under his breath, often in the third person; this miserable creature is well aware that he is his own grandfather.
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> These backward aborigines can be found in the Fiji Islands, in Tahiti, in New Guinea, in Vienna, in Paris, in Rome, in New York--wherever there are men. They are called parents. Long before our birth, even before we are conceived, our parents have decided who we will be.

J. P. Sartre, Foreword to The Traitor by André Gorz (London: Calder, 1960), pp. 14-15, quoted in R. D. Laing, The Politics of Experience (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 56.

That is, the reader can very reasonably and very logically assume that Marceline would gladly live her life in such a mould, and that both she and Michel come from highly compatible backgrounds. She too would submit to the gentle wisdom of the parental wishes that Michel has found so natural; and the parental influence is indeed pictured as being both gentle and wise. Michel had lost his mother when he was quite young, and the strict nature of his mother's teachings had become little more than a memory. They had been supplanted by his father's influence, a kind of scholastic atheism in which the whole of the lives of both the father and the son were taken up with the most arcane of scholarly research; and this is the life which Marceline would have been very suited to share with Michel.

Thus there is an arranged marriage, the most tranquil of institutions and one that is far removed from the emotional upheavels and interior drama of the proposed engagements of André Walter and La Porte Etroite. The marriage of L'Immoraliste starts off in great emotional contrast to the atmospher of these other books, but there is at least one essential point of absolute similarity and that is the kind of family milieu which both characters share. And if one accepts the idea that this is an arranged marriage in the classical definition, then it is only logical that such a compatibility and homogeneity in family backgrounds should be the basis of the marriage. Michel, and also Marceline one can imagine, have put themselves into

s situation that is not of their own making; and furthermore they have done so without any misgivings, at least on Michel's part; because the reader becomes aware very early in the novel that he is going to see the story quite exclusively from Michel's point of view and this arises partly from the fact that at the time of the recounting of the tale Marceline is dead and Michel is making a personal confession to very close friends. Michel chooses to see himself and his bride as compatible and therefore they set out on this basis of comfortable similarity, a similarity which Germaine Brée describes as an appearance of their both seeming very old at the time of their marriage's beginning.[4] And she goes on to explain the logic of Michel's lack of youthfulness:

> Molded by the grave Huguenot teaching of a mother who died when he was fifteen, brought up by a learned father immersed in the study of the past, himself a historian, Michel had lived a hothouse existence: "And so I reached the age of twenty-five, having looked at nothing except books and ruins and knowing nothing of life.5

But Brée concludes that one can only explain Marceline's seeming so wearily old by making connections between Michel's story and events from Gide's own life. Without disputing this connection, one can also point out the fact that two young

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[4]Brée, p. 128.

[5]Ibid., p. 128.

people who emerge from a similarly strict tradition are bound to seem old, especially when they are required to go through the ritual of marriage, the institution which will maintain the family on the same unchanging basis that their parents had known. They have behind them the old traditions of the preceding generations, and those young people who maintain such a style of tradition have absorbed it from their earliest childhood and are--from the point of view of their attitudes--the same age as the parents of which they are such a faithful copy. They may very well have received a set of values and a set of ideas from these parents, ideas and values that they can intellectually examine and perhaps modify or even discard; but the ingrained style of life that they have taken on without knowing it is both below and beyond the level of conscious examination and possible rejection.

The process of family tradition which Michel and Marceline have both undergone is such that the two young people are virtually asleep, experiencing the dream induced by the no doubt subtle but inexorable pressures of their families. Such an arrangement may be judged as undesirable in itself, but in any case it is clear that it becomes disastrous if only one of the partners wakes up from this stupor of family tradition; and when Michel does so the results are bound to be tragic for Marceline. And Germaine Brée is undoubtedly correct in saying that the reader must look to Gide's own experience to realize the depth of the

tragic consequences which the two newlyweds are bound to suffer, because no matter how speculative are the origins of Gide's incompatibility with his wife and the extent of suffering which this difference in temperament caused, it is clear that they were fated to experience an ever-widening and basically unbridgable gap.

Whether or not Gide could envisage this kind of increasingly deteriorating situation after seven years of marriage is again only speculative, but in L'Immoraliste he explores to the very conclusion a potential that was created in his own and also in Michel's family background. What was naturally avoided in Gide's own existence was the extreme nature of the realization of the potential common to the biographical and fictional situations. Thus one sees the difficulty in assessing either the extent of blame which one might wish to attach to Gide's own actions in regard to his wife or the extent of purgation which Gide himself experienced in fictionally exploring his own problems to a disastrous conclusion. Michel is irresistibly drawn to explore a process of self-liberation and of the discovery of his sexual preferences. It may very well be that Gide in 1902 was transmitting to his readers the sense of bewilderment that he himself was undergoing as to the root causes of his personal problems, but some twenty years later he speculated thus:

> J'ai toutes raisons de penser que je suis le premier uraniste de ma lignée. Aussi loin que je sache remonter dans le passé de mes ascendants, je ne vois que protestants rigides et contraints; s'ils ont eu des velléités de cette sorte, ils

> ont lutté contre, et ils les ont étouffées. Justement! Je suis leur victime. . . .Ce n'est pas en vain que, pendant plusieurs générations, on contrarie, dans tous les domaines, ses tendances les plus naturelles. Arrive le moment où la nature est la plus forte. A travers moi, si je puis dire, elle se venge d'eux, de leur rigueur. . . .Je paye pour eux, je suis leur châtiment. . . .6

And when Gide goes on to discuss the origins of homosexuality, he makes it clear the he does not feel that he is the victim of some genetic characteristic but rather of a style of family life that in some manner became the breeding ground for homosexuality in some generation. This kind of rational analysis properly belongs with those contained in Corydon, whose arguments about the origins and nature of homosexuality have stood up remarkably well in the face of recent psychological insights.[7] But Michel is not given the benefits of this kind of scientific research, and he must face up to the dilemma of slowly discovering the various problematical aspects of his latent homosexuality without any seeming insight into either his own psychological constitution or that of Marceline. Indeed, Michel would seem to be imperceptive in rather ordinary matters of human understanding; and in a manner that perhaps goes beyond the explanation that he was raised in such a scholastically insular fashion; and when he begins his self-exploration he does so from a point of absolute zero.

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[6]Martin du Gard, pp. 40-41.

[7]See Frank Beach's "Comments on the Second Dialogue

It is in retrospect that Michel recounts the story of these disastrous few months, after he has gained some human insight at such great expense to himself and especially to Marceline. He explains to his childhood friends:

> J'avais vécu pour moi ou du moins selon moi jusqu'alors; je m'étais marié sans imaginer en ma femme autre chose qu'un camarade, sans songer bien précisément que, de notre union, ma vie pourrait être changée. Je venais de comprendre enfin que là cessait le monologue.[8]

He further makes it clear that he had never regarded Marceline with any special attention, that their families had been so closely allied that the two of them had grown up together without his ever having noticed her as an individual, and it is clear that she had been a part of his life much in the way that a sister would have been. In this respect his situation is not at all removed from the relationship of André Walter and Jérôme to their respective intended fiancées; but Michel shows an apparently complete as to the brother-sister relationship that he has had with Marceline because he had expected both his own life and his relationship with her to remain largely unaltered.

And if Michel is truly aware of Marceline's expectations from their marital situation, he is not disposed to compromise

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in Corydon", the appendix to Corydon (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1950), p. 179ff.

[8]Gide, L'Immoraliste, p. 33.

his own ideals to suit her less ambitious desires. Marceline shows no sign of not expecting a quiet and conventional marital relationship, since she is unwilling or unable to join Michel in his career of liberation and self-realization. She no doubt also expects a conventional physical relationship with her husband; but at the time of the wedding trip Michel admits to having really looked at her for the first time. He shows no physical interest, while the reader can see that Marceline is making as many wifely advances toward her husband as the ethics and customs of the period would make natural. She offers him her brow, lowers her eyes, but evokes a feeling in him which he can only identify as pity. Marceline is apparently not understood by Michel, and since he does not realize his failure to understand, he never really consults her as to her true feelings. She remains unconsulted and left to her own devices because her husband remains--for the most part--egocentric, at least until her situation is quite beyond hope. The exigencies of his own problems are too great for him to be able to do anything but attempt to solve them with no regard for anyone else, even for his wife; and when the portrait of the husband emerges from L'Immoraliste he is really seen as an individual quite separate from his wife.

Michel is driven, on the surface, by his new sense of liberation from the forces of his early training, which had all been repressive. Even if the religious Puritanism of his mother had ceased when he was fifteen and had slowly faded

from the forefront of his psychological constitution, it had been replaced by the stuffy scholasticism of his father and the rarefied intellectual circles in which he moved and to which the young Michel adapted himself so precociously. With such a background, compounded with a physical weakness that had gone unnoticed because of almost complete inactivity, a sense of spiritual and physical liberation was bound to have been an experience that would have taken all of Michel's attention. But when this sense of liberation, that is presumably legitimate, was combined with the disturbing new sexual feelings, the psychological upheaval is pictured as too great to allow Michel any other considerations. That his wife should be on the scene when he undergoes this startling personal transformation is a hindrance for him and a tragedy for her; and when Gide matches Michel's one-sided preoccupations with an underplayed portrayal of Marceline, there is something of a tacitly negative judgment made as to Marceline herself, and perhaps even of the wife in general. The story develops so as to show the wife as incapable of meeting the demands of the situation, a situation which only the husband sees as salutary.

As long as Michel is ill on the wedding trip and Marceline can play the wifely role of devoted nurse, there is no difficulty in their relationship. Michel's selfish pursuit of good health is even admirable; but when the selfishness continues after his health has recovered, Marceline's situation

becomes more and more alarming. Her husband is only too aware that she is devoted to a calm existence, one of quiet pleaures and a slow pace, a pace that Michel now finds exasperating. He is desperate not to return to the state he had known before his illness, the state which had been so natural in the family life he had known up to this time, the family life that was so compatible with that of his new wife; but when she falls seriously ill in turn, Michel is not so monstrous as to be able to abandon her on all occasions. He has great pangs of conscience and makes an attempt at nursing her, finding locations that will improve her health and yet really only finding new pretenses to gratify himself. He realizes that he is now the stronger of the two, and he sees this strength both in physical terms and in terms of his greater commitment to self-liberation and self-exploration. But at the same time he feels a tenderness, a sense of pity and even what he characterizes as love for her, and he kisses her with a feeling of piety at her condition; for she is at this stage reduced to a feminine, wifely role, and there is no hint, for example, that Michel feels any resentment at her personally for their problematic situation. She has not failed as an individual but as a type, the typical wife in whom Michel is fated never to be interested, first because of his new sense of liberation from that which she represents and secondly because of the homosexual urges which are becoming increasingly insistent within him.

Marceline, at this time, is very much in the background, ill but uncomplaining even when she is rather obviously not being given proper attention. She is uncomplaining and passive as is seen to be natural as she continues her wifely role of comforting her husband when he wishes to return to her as she waits to bear his child. She does not reprove her husband for his moral shortcomings just as she had not complained about the physical orientation of their marriage for which Michel had been given complete responsibility. The delayed consummation of the marriage had been the decision of Michel and he had apparently not been reproached or even called into question as to his decision; and Gide gives some indication as to the nature of his thinking on this point in Corydon, when the rather analogous example of Daphnis and Chloë is discussed clinically by Dr. Corydon and his interviewer. The anonymous heterosexual interviewer says:

> --Les maladresses et les lenteurs dont vous parlez ne sont là que pour fournir à ce roman si nu quelque étoffe et quelque aventure.
> --Non, non! Sous un léger revêtement d'afféterie, je reconnais dans ce livre admirable une profonde science de ce que M. de Gourmont appelle la Physique de l'amour et je tiens l'histoire de Daphnis et Chloé pour exemplairement naturelle.[9]

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[9]Gide, Corydon (Paris: N.R.F., 1935), IX, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 285.

But if the naturalness shown in Daphnis and Chloë is the portrayal of male ineptitude, it might also be noted that the feminine quality of passivity is also a vital factor; and it is even a more noticeable and even inexplicable factor in the civilized setting of Michel and Marceline's story as opposed to the quaintly stylized and innocent pastoral atmosphere of Daphnis and Chloë. The reader must inevitably question himself as to what kind of person Marceline can be to submit to the situations which Michel creates for her. One might judge, for example, that Marceline is abnormally submissive; and although there is nothing in the story to indicate that she is to be seen as abnormal, there is no doubt that for literary purposes a wife whose passivity goes beyond what one generally considers normal would be a perfect literary device, an excellent foil for the frantic career of liberation which Michel seems driven to attempt. For one thing, the few glimpses of Marceline's personality which come through indicate that she is capable of a studied, if quiet, irony. She remarks, for example, that the savage strength that Michel praises in Athalaric and that condemns the weak would of necessity leave her condemned also; but this quiet comment too is not a sign of rebellion. She accepts the ideas of Michel and also the role which he obviously sees for her. She is not questioned, not consulted, and does not require any physical relationship that the husband does not initiate. Furthermore she is very content, apparently, to play this rôle; or in any case she

never brings any consistent complaint to her husband's attention. As a wife, she is clearly a spiritual and moral inspiration, a veritable paragon of a style of nineteenth-century womanly qualities, qualities which, however, could apply equally to a mother, a sister or any woman in a Platonic relationship.

In pointing out what he characterizes as the pedagogical strain in Gide's writings, Max Marchand sees this portrayal of the feminine type as both typical of much of Gide's point of view, and as having a specific role in his relationship with Madeleine Gide herself:

> Pour amener Madeleine à ses vues, Gide pense qu'il faudra lui enseigner deux choses. C'est d'une part qu'il est possible de dissocier la sensualité de l'amour et, d'autre part, que la femme, pour des raisons psychologiques et physiologiques, n'a pas les mêmes exigences que l'homme. C'est sur de telles idées qu'il va bâtir son oeuvre littéraire.
> . . .Le voici donc, prenant son parti de séparer le plaisir et l'amour. Il lui semble d'ailleurs que la chose est souhaitable parce que le plaisir sera plus intense si rien de sentimental ne s'y mêle et l'amour plus durable et plus parfait si le coeur se trouve soustrait aux appétits charnels.10

Thus if one accepts Marchand's idea that André Walter, La Porte Etroite and L'Immoraliste are all part of an educational treatise composed by Gide for the persuasion of Madeleine, then the final conclusion that physical pleasure and spiritual love are best separated by the married couple is a valid

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[10]Marchand, p. 63.

enough summary of these works in regard to their common treatment of the theme of marriage and family life. Before marriage the three couples show the same regard for spiritual values, or at least one is led to imagine that Michel and Marceline would, because of their backgrounds, share the basic beliefs of Jérôme, Alissa and even André Walter and Emmanuèle. But since L'Immoraliste begins with the marriage of the couple the question of staying at arm's length takes on an entirely different complexion; and if Gide's private lesson to his actual wife is indeed involved, it is less explicit than the view of psychology and physiology of the wife and of women in general that Marchand also mentions, because his analysis that Gide is portraying the woman as being by nature more spiritual than the man, as being psychologically and physiologically constituted so as to feel sexual urges of a far lesser degree, would seem to be an understood factor in the portrayal of the fiancée and wife in these three works.

Gide, it would seem, had no view of the woman that would differ greatly from that which was most commonly held in the Victorian era. The woman who was to be considered as normal, marriagable, the future wife and mother was one who submitted to masculine exigencies when the social and legal

conventions had been duly recognized. One imagines that Geneviève, in 1936, at last portrayed the woman who could have fitted into a different scheme of things; but the women of the preceding years were largely strictly divided between the scarlet women of the type Isabelle represented and the devoted and shyly correct wives. It was after the death of Madeleine [illegible] was reported by Denis de [illegible] acknowledging the error of his point of view in regard to women:

> J'ai trop longtemps gardé cette illusion que la femme n'avait pas besoin du commerce physique autant que nous. . . .Hélas! je ne voyais pas clair. . . .On se trompe ainsi, et les conséquences. . . .J'ai été assez bête pour croire cela! Il ne faut jamais croire ce qu'elles nous disent. . . .Je vous parle très sincèrement, je vous parle de choses qui ont joué un rôle très grave dans ma vie. C'est ainsi que j'ai commis, à cette époque--je parle de mon premier séjour en Afrique--, une terrible erreur d'aiguillage.[11]

But thirty-six years separated the publication of L'Immoraliste and the death of Madeleine Gide, and in 1902 Gide undoubtedly believed that he was exploring the possibilities in a marital situation that, if admittedly problematic, was also viable and indeed preferable to a less spiritual arrangement.

Michel and Marceline, however, have in combination too great a weight of problems to successfully carry out such a

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[11] D. de Rougemont, "Un Complot de Protestants", dans "Hommage à André Gide", p. 283, N.R.F., quoted in Marchand, p. 80.

marriage. If Michel is disposed to separate his physical and emotional life, he is also largely unaware of this basic fact or at least in unaware that this tendency represents a formidable hurdle to a successful marriage. This tendency is reinforced by his latent homosexuality, but here too Michel had apparently remained largely unaware of the fact of his sexual orientation and thus of the inevitable [illegible] would represent in his marriage. Michel's lack of awareness of his true situation is so complete that at no time does he envisage a kind of sham marriage that he cynically undertakes in order to have a respectable social screen behind which he can hide his socially unacceptable practices. If this were his deliberate plan, however, there could be no better marital arrangement than to have Marceline as his wife, since she is disposed to consent to Michel's actions with no protest, it would seem. Marceline is squarely within the tradition of Gide's portrayal of quietly patient wives and potential fiancées who either are very much in the background of their men's lives, or at least are presented in Gide's works as being sufficiently passive as not to intrude into the narrative which is so often presented from the man's point of view.[12] In L'Immoraliste this one-sided narration is not only conspicuous, but can be argued as a very signifi-

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[12] See A. J. Guérard's analysis of Gide's portrayal of husbands and wives in André Gide, p. 157.

typically unperceptive regarding the overtly sexual nature of his feelings for Gertrude, it does, by omission for the most part, give the reader to understand certain qualities about the wife; for the tendency soon becomes a reflex to construe what the pastor says in opposite terms, giving a very salutary picture of the wife, a picture that is not out of line with the wives and fiancées seen thus far.

Thus her tendency to narrow and restrict his life is seen as simply being sensible and temperate. When the pastor speaks of the enslaving, domesticating atmosphere which prevails in the household she has created, it tends to deny rather than affirm the doctrines of liberation found in Les Nourritures Terrestres and L'Enfant Prodigue, doctrines which aim squarely at the values of homelife as being inevitably stultifying. Whether or not this is a typical Gidian process of giving the opposite face of the coin an equal viewing is doubtful in that the overall weight of Gide's arguments inevitably tends to favour the side which advocates the liberation of the individual; but in any case it makes clear the fact that the woman is constantly portrayed as the provider and maintainer of the safe harbour which the man, through caprice, folly, or valid sense of adventure, can and does desert and subsequently return to with the woman's forgiveness. After the events of La Symphonie

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as crudely as this. These sentences nevertheless show how unconvincing a misdirected economy can be in such a story of self-betrayal.

Guérard, p. 142.

Pastorale, the son Jacques is moved to leave his father's household and faith, but the wife Amélie consents to provide her husband the spiritual comfort of kneeling with him to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

Both Marceline and Amélie are typical of much of Gide's representation of the dutiful wife, who most often remains passively unconsulted in the background while the husband follows his pious whims and even rather vicious adventures; and thus, largely through absence of contrary evidence, there would seem to be a general portrayal of the wife as the moral and ethical superior of the husband. The husband on the other hand is clearly shown to be the superior in regard to his sense of adventure, of liberation, of discovering his individuality and of having the impulse to seek salutary changes in his own and other people's lives. The weight of the examples of L'Immoraliste and La Symphonie Pastorale tends to show that these two qualities are typical, ingrained, and inevitably at opposite extremes of the feminine and masculine natures. Superior in one regard, the marital partner must apparently be greatly lacking in the other balancing quality, and the husband and wife are never shown to confront each other on a basis of equality. And if the reader looks to further works by Gide for a portrayal of marital partners who are equal in redeeming qualities, he is most likely to conclude that the husband and wife are only shown to be equal in their negative attributes, and that each is finally

only capable of supplementing the weakness of the other's nature.

CHAPTER IV

LES FAUX-MONNAYEURS: NATURAL AND UNNATURAL SONS

The relationship between children and their parents figures prominently among Gide's portrayal of the many forms of moral counterfeiting which exist in the world of the Faux-Monnayeurs; for Gide essentially illustrates that the raising of children is at best a problematic experience and is very likely to involve the production of counterfeit people, the minting of whom is a process that is all too predictable. At the conclusion of his 1921 Journal entries Gide included these comments in the detached, undated pages:

> Le sage Sainte-Beuve dénonce, je ne sais plus où, ce fréquent travers de l'esprit de se pousser de préférence et chercher des invitations, du côté où déjà par nature il penche le plus. Et c'est là ce qui me fait si souvent déplorer qu'aux parents soit confiée la garde des enfants qui déjà naïvement leur ressemblent et qui trouvent en eux l'exemple et l'encouragement de leurs secrètes dispositions; ce qui fait qu'à vrai dire l'éducation familiale bien rarement les redresse, mais mais qu'elle aide à les incliner, et que les fils de parents butés sont butés plus avant encore, enfoncés de droite ou de gauche et ne pouvant le plus souvent retrouver la verticale que par un regimbement plein de risques. Si je n'aimais le bref, j'écrirais tout un livre là-dessus, mais qui ferait crier au scandale; car enfin sur une quarantaine de familles que j'ai pu observer je n'en connais peut-être pas quatre où les parents n'agissent point de telle sorte que rien ne serait plus souhaitable pour l'enfant que d'échapper à leur empire. Certains s'indignent de l'alcoolique enseignant à son fils à boire

> qui, selon leurs biais, n'agissent pas différemment.[1]

Taking these sentiments into account, it is not surprising that when Les Faux-Monnayeurs opens with a son confronting his relationship with his father, it is not a confrontation that is initially at all flattering to the father. Bernard has reached an age when he is about to attempt his baccalauréat only to discover that Judge Profitendieu is not his natural father, and that he is the product of ten-day liaison between his mother and a lover whose identity is never disclosed. Bernard's reaction to this news, which in general he receives with a studied composure, is one of apparent satisfaction. The composure, however, and his immediate decision to run away from the home in which he was raised are both facts which can only be designed to impress Bernard himself, since he makes the discovery by reading carefully hidden letters when he is completely alone in the house and when he could just as easily have kept the secret to himself, thus going along with the family custom that had been established. But Bernard reacts in a manner that would seem to be in line with the thesis of the proposition regarding parental influences that Gide had written in the 1921 Journal. Bernard reacts by telling himself that "ne pas savoir qui est son père,

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[1] Journal 1889-1939 (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1948), p. 718.

c'est ça qui guérit de la peur de lui ressembler. Toute recherche oblige. Ne retenons de ceci que la délivrance. N'approfondissons pas".[2] He thus experiences a sense of relief in finding that he is not of the same genetic stamp as the man whose opinions, manner of life and very name he finds quite ridiculous. Rather than feeling cut adrift from legitimate origins with which he can identify himself and which can serve as a basis for his own life, Bernard feels himself capable of setting out for a life which will be a kind of adventure of discovery, in which his sincerest wish is this: "Je voudrais, tout le long de ma vie, au moindre choc, rendre un son pur, probe, authentique. Presque tous les gens que j'ai connus sonnent faux".[3]

Taking into account Gide's fundamental doubt regarding the desirability of raising children within their natural family circle, it is by no means a paradox that the illegitimate son, the counterfeit coin, should be the one to conceive this kind of lofty ambition; for it is the authentic citizen, the magistrate Oscar Molinier who wishes to have his son Olivier shun the company of Bernard, and is delighted that Olivier should have gained a friendship with the basically corrupt but aristocratic Comte de Passavant. He is further pleased and gratified that his eldest son had developed a friendship with

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[2]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs (Paris: Gallimard, Livre de Poche, 1925), p. 8.

[3]Ibid., p. 251.

the Prince of Monaco, and that the younger son George is able to have a senator's son as a classmate at the Vedel-Azaïs school.

What Oscar Molinier cannot see, however, is that these relationships are indeed disastrous. By meeting the Prince of Monaco, Vincent has become firmly entangled with Lilian, an entanglement that will end in her death and his ruin in hiding and at the brink of insanity. Olivier has become associated with Passavant only to be slowly drawn into the world of false values and dissembling which represent the exclusive substance of this nobleman's way of life; and young George is fated to become the accessory to the suicide pact in which Boris will die. And with the exception of Boris' death, which becomes a matter of public scandal, the elder Molinier will never really have to face up to the disasters which have occurred to his sons. The undesirable effects of his example are in large part based upon the fact that he is so obtuse in regard to human realities and motivations, and he will not be in a postion where he is forced to forego the self-satisfied apophthegms which are the foundation of his bourgeois morality. And such homilies are most certainly concerned with the subject of raising children. Oscar tells Edouard:

> Mais il faut bien se rendre compte qu'à partir d'un certain âge, les enfants nous échappent. C'est dans la règle, et il n'y a rien à faire à cela. Pauline voudrait rester penchée sur eux. Elle est comme toutes les mères. Je lui dis parfois: 'Mais tu les embêtes, tes fils.

> Laisse-les donc tranquilles. C'est toi qui leur donnes des idées, avec toutes tes questions. . .'. Moi, je tiens que cela ne sert à rien de les surveiller trop longtemps. L'important, c'est qu'une première éducation leur inculque quelques bons principes. L'important, c'est surtout qu'ils aient de qui tenir. L'hérédité, voyez-vous, mon cher, ça triomphe de tout. Il y a certains mauvais sujets que rien n'amende; ce que nous appelons: les prédestinés. Il est nécessaire, ceux-là, de les tenir très serrés. Mais quand on a affaire à de bonnes natures, on peut lâcher la bride un peu.4

Thus Oscar can successfully flatter himself that he has been an admirable father because he has instilled "quelques bons principes" but most of all because he has provided the solid hereditary factors, which will see to it that nothing of a fundamental nature can go wrong with his children.

And although Pauline is a model wife for this type of husband, she is not so obtuse as he and therefore cannot help but see through his more fatuous attitudes; and in this respect she is like her sons, who clearly see that the bourgeois Judge Molinier's self-satisfied ethic is essentially false. The elder Molinier, Profitendieu, Azaïs and Vedel are apparently fooling no one to any great extent, for religious and bourgeois fatuity both have the qualities of self-mystification in common. Edouard observes about Vedel:

> A mesure qu'une âme s'enfonce dans la dévotion, elle perd le sens, le goût, le besoin, l'amour de la réalité. J'ai également observé cela chez

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[4]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, pp. 282-283.

> Vedel, si peu que j'aie pu lui parler. L'éblouissment de leur foi les aveugle sur le monde qui les entoure, et sur eux-mêmes. Pour moi qui n'ai rien tant à coeur que d'y voir clair, je reste ahuri devant l'épaisseur de mensonge où peut se complaire un dévot.5

In the Vedel household, however, there is a note of consolation in the fact that the wife of Pastor Vedel is as lost in this unreality as is her husband; but the children have little choice but to engage in deceit to keep up the pretense of taking their parents seriously, struggling to find their own way while still humouring the obvious weaknesses of these parents.

Such a need for dissembling finally puts the children very close to adopting the stance of vicious irony of a Passavant who, in an aristocratic household, has conceived this attitude toward the paternal bond:

> Ecoutez, cher ami, je ne voudrais pas vous paraître cynique, mais j'ai horreur des sentiments tout faits. J'avais confectionné dans mon coeur pour mon père, un amour filial sur mesure, mais qui, dans les premiers temps, flottait un peu et que j'avais été amené à rétrécir. Le vieux ne m'a jamais valu la vie que des ennuis, des contrariétés, de la gêne.6

And even if the children of the bourgeois and clerical households may never give as biting an appraisal of their fathers as is this testimonial delivered at the time of the old count's

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[5]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 134.

[6]Ibid., p. 54.

death, they share something of the same quality of contempt toward their respective fathers, men who have not dared be as extreme in their conduct as was the elder Comte de Passavant, who in his aristocratic position was quite open in his contempt and selfishness toward everyone, including his sons. They too can rebel against such manifest shortcomings on the part of their fathers, but like the Comte de Passavant who has soured his life with cynicism that has been all too easily nurtured in his family milieu, they too must face up to the word of caution that Gide puts into the very nature of rebellion against one's family; and this is the fact that by rebelling against such qualities as are bound to be similar to one's own through hereditary factors, one suffers so much from the rebellion itself that the result is a warping of the character that is too great a price to pay for any liberation that is gained. The child is morally crippled in the liberation process and therefore goes on to a disaster of his own making, one that is perhaps different from the one that his family life had prepared him for, but a disaster in any case.

An example of a life that has gone disastrously wrong by following a bent that is manifestly not in keeping with preceding training and influences is that of Vincent Molinier. Vincent did not fall into the pattern of self-satisfied hypocrisy that his father Oscar typified, but at the same time he clearly never realized the benefits of his honest and scholarly temperament; and the reader learns of his degenera-

tion at the same time that he learns of the existence of Alexandre Vedel, the elder brother of Armand.

Alexandre had run away to Africa, and after squandering the money given him by the angelic sister Rachel and after suffering business disasters, he had managed to find his own equilibrium in some style of business, one that Armand cynically hints as being far from humanitarian and likely involving the exploitation of the Africans. It is this pastor's eldest son who has taken in the delirious Vincent (whose identity is not known either to Alexandre, Armand or Olivier) and thus there is effected the meeting of the two elder sons of the respectable bourgeois and pastoral backgrounds, a meeting that is witnessed unknowingly by the two respective younger sons. This is, for Gide, a reproduction of some of the most important aspects of the story of the Prodigal Son, because in his Enfant Prodigue Gide had shown the elder son as having come to grief in his escape from the paternal hosuehold; but the essential Gidian quality was that this elder son inspired the youngest son to escape the parental influence also, and there is the strong suggestion that this youngest son will succeed in carrying out the escape. The experience acquired so painfully by the elder brother will no doubt allow the younger brother to avoid some of the hazards that proved the undoing of the son who first attempted the rebellion. One notices that Armand is toying with the idea of joining his brother's footsteps with a great deal less risk than the

older brother had known. But Armand too will be carrying the psychological scars of his upbringing, and along with this ingrained cynicism of character he has also acquired an insidious white lesion in his mouth that he has determined to leave untreated and which can easily be interpreted as a physical sign of the too drastic rebellion against the otherwordly piety of his father. Out of sight in Africa, however, Armand would undoubtedly find the many problems of self-realization which remained all but insoluble in France greatly simplified, and the pastor's son could leave his father's house, his school and "l'air empesté qu'on y respire, sous l'étouffant couvert de la morale et de la religion".[7]

Olivier, on the other hand, is not in a position for such a pat solution as the removal to a foreign country, and indeed no such solution is brought forward either for him, Georges, or the youngest brother Caloub, who is mentioned enigmatically as the very concluding word of the novel. Again, it was the eldest brother Vincent who stated their position in an analogy drawn from botany. At Rambouillet Vincent was giving yet another of his discourses on natural phenomena which Lilian found so enchanting and which Passavant treated lightly but was quick to repeat as his own when he was in the company of others. Vincent says:

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[7]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 274.

> Quand j'examine un rameau, je remarque qu'à l'aisselle de chacune de ses feuilles, il abrite un bourgeon, capable, l'an suivant, de végéter à son tour. Quand j'observe que, de tant de bourgeons, deux tout au plus se développent, condamnant à l'atrophie, par leur croissance même, tous les autres, je ne me retiens pas de penser qu'il en va de même pour l'homme. Les bourgeons qui se développent naturellement sont toujours les bourgeons terminaux--c'est-à-dire: ceux qui sont les plus éloignés du tronc familial.[8]

But Vincent's fate illustrates that mere separation from the parent stem is no guarantee that the bud will achieve a happy and successful flowering. Perhaps there is comfort to be drawn from the notion that the younger brothers are like the buds which are, by reasons of the succession of their respective births, naturally further removed from the parents simply by the time element. In any case, Vincent goes on with the analogy to talk of the pruning and nurturing process which enables the buds to come to useful life, a factor which is certainly as important as mere separation from the insidious influence of the parent trunk; and the question of the source of this nurture for the younger Molinier sons is of no less importance than the basic Gidian requirement of having them develop at some distance from parental influences.

But, as might be expected for such a problem, there is no single solution or, apparently, favoured suggestion as

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[8]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 188.

to the source and nature of these salutary influences on the young. Several possibilities are raised, however, and one which ties in quite directly with the 1921 Journal entry is that of the nature of the upbringing which Laura's child will receive once it has been clearly established that Vincent has abandoned her completely to embark on what will prove to be his own abortive career. To further complicate Laura's predicament, she has been befriended by Edouard, whose interests are Platonic because of his homsexual tendencies, and by Bernard, who is largely involved in the exploration of the possibilities which are open to him in his new life. Thus abandoned by her lover and her family and left in the care of unconventional friends, Laura represents an extreme case in which the resolution of her story can be a kind of social experiment; and the solution to her problem and that of her illegitimate child is apparently to come about through her legal husband, Professor Douviers, a largely undilineated figure who had been kept out of the main action of the book and out of the direct sight of the reader.

Douviers is only presented through the eyes and the reportage of others, often through Edouard's journal which, one can only imagine, is the most subjective of analyses. Without hearing the professor speak for himself, one receives the overwhelming impression of a man who is admirable only in that he is a classic type of meek person who has turned this quality to as much account as is possible. When Bernard, at

his own discretion, informs Douviers by letter that Laura is carrying someone else's child, the reaction of the professor is to accept both the situation and the child. Bernard has brought about a situation identical to his own, that of having a child raised by someone other than his natural parent, the situation which Gide saw as desirable and in which he placed those characters, such as Bernard and Lafcadio of Les Caves du Vatican, from whom he expected to see a particularly noteworthy development of character.

But in fact the very atmosphere of Laura's wedding had produced in Edouard the most profoundly pessimistic thoughts about the nature of the family unit. He recalls those thoughts and amplifies them with more recent observations, all of which bear out the main points of Gide's 1921 Journal entry regarding the raising of children:

> Certes, il n'est pas de geôle (intellectuelle) dont un vigoureux esprit ne s'échappe; et rien de ce qui pousse à la révolte n'est définitivement dangereux--encore que la révolte puisse fausser le caractère (elle le replie, le retourne ou le cabre et conseille une ruse impie); et l'enfant qui ne cède pas à l'influence familiale, use à s'en délivrer la primeur de son énergie. Mais encore l'éducation qui contrarie l'enfant, en le gênant le fortifie. Les plus lamentables victimes sont celles de l'adulation. Pour détester ce qui vous flatte, quelle force de caractère ne faut-il pas? Que de parents j'ai vus (la mère surtout), se plaire à reconnaître chez leurs enfants, encourager chez eux, leurs répugnances les plus niaises, leurs partis pris les plus injustes, leurs incompréhensions, leurs phobies. . . .A table: "Laisse donc ça; tu vois bien que c'est du gras. Enlève la peau. Ça n'est pas assez cuit. . . ." Dehors, le soir: "Oh! Une chauve-souris. . . .Couvre-toi vite; elle va venir dans tes cheveux." Etc. . . . .

> Avec eux, les hannetons mordent, les sauterelles piquent, les vers de terre donnent des boutons. Equivalents absurdités dans tous les domaines, intellectuel, moral, etc.9

And if Gide gives many new and specific examples of the kind of protective parental influence that he considers so damaging, he still introduces Edouard's analysis with the familiar warning that rebellion from family influence is so damaging--in the sense of debilitating--as to be as ruinous as the family influence itself. Less direct analysis is given to the note of hope which Edouard shortly interjects in his pessimistic appraisal of family influences. He finishes this journal entry with these ringing words:

> L'avenir appartient aux bâtards.--Quelle signification dans ce mot: "un enfant naturel. Seul le bâtard a droit au naturel."10

But the family system is so omnipresent that it quite automatically closes around these natural sons, who will at best have very limited chances to be natural in the sense of not showing the stamp of their parent's household.

Bernard, for example, has informed Douviers of Laura's predicament in the full confidence that the unborn child will receive normal fatherly affection. Bernard asks Laura if she believes that someone else's child can be loved in the same manner as one's own. Laura is less assured, and expresses her

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[9]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, pp. 142-143.

[10]Ibid., p. 143.

hopes, and Bernard gives a rather learned explanation:

> --Est-ce que vous croyez qu'on peut aimer l'enfant d'un autre autant que le sein propre, vraiment?
> --Je ne sais pas si je le crois; mais je l'espère.
> --Pour moi, je le crois. Et je ne crois pas, au contraire, à ce qu'on appelle si bêtement "la voix du sang". Oui, je crois que cette fameuse voix n'est qu'un mythe. J'ai lu que, chez certaines peuplades des îles de l'Océanie, c'est la coutume d'adopter les enfants d'autrui, et que ces enfants adoptés sont souvent préférés aux autres. Le livre disait, je m'en souviens fort bien, "plus choyés".[11]

Bernard, in actual fact, is thinking about the nature of his own relationship with the stepfather whom he has just recently discovered not to be his natural father. Bernard is beginning to see, as Profitendieu himself has come to realize, that the judge has in fact preferred and admired Bernard to the other children whom he has fathered himself. Thus Bernard's conviction that Douviers will show as much and indeed more paternal affection for Laura's child is really a matter of personal conviction rather than some anthropological thesis.

In other words, Douviers will act honourably and in a manner that will do him genuine credit, in a situation that would be viewed by many as being compromising and even as showing him in a ridiculous light. And when Douviers visits Edouard, the novelist records his reactions in his journal:

> J'étais fermement résolu à ne point lui livrer le nom du séducteur; mais, à ma surprise, il ne

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[11]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 249.

> me l'a pas demandé. Je crois que sa jalousie retombe dès qu'il ne se sent plus contemplé par Laura. En tout cas, sa démarche près de moi venait d'en fatiguer un peu l'énergie.
>
> Quelque illogisme dans son cas; il s'indigne que l'autre ait abandonné Laura. J'ai fait valoir que, sans cet abandon, Laura ne lui serait pas revenue. Il se promet d'aimer l'enfant comme il aimerait le sien propre. Les joies de la paternité, qui sait si, sans le séducteur, il aurait pu jamais les connaître? C'est ce que je me suis gardé de lui faire observer, car, au souvenir de ses insuffisances, sa jalousie s'exaspère. Mais dès lors elle ressortit à l'amour-propre et cesse de m'intéresser.
>
> Qu'un Othello soit jaloux, cela se comprend; l'image du plaisir pris par sa femme avec autrui l'obsède. Mais un Douviers, pour devenir jaloux, doit se figurer qu'il doit l'être.
>
> Et sans doute entretient-il en lui cette passion par un secret besoin de corser son personnage un peu mince. Le bonheur lui serait naturel; mais il a besoin de s'admirer et c'est l'obtenu, non le naturel, qu'il estime. Je me suis donc évertué à lui peindre le simple bonheur plus méritoire que le tourment, et très difficile à atteindre. Ne l'ai laissé partir que rasséréné.12

Thus if Douviers can aspire to, and no doubt achieve, a genuine affection for the illegitimate son who is about to be born he will match the style set by Profitendieu that Bernard has slowly come to appreciate. But there is little to hope that this transplant into an artificial family is in some manner an improvement over the usual system of the child born to both parents and raised by them, since Edouard establishes that Douviers is not only effete and somewhat ridiculous by nature,

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[12]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, pp. 420-421.

but he is also as much of a counterfeit personality as any of the bourgeois fathers whom the reader has met thus far. The professor seems only capable of counterfeit passions, which he experiences because they are in keeping with the situation and not because he feels them genuinely. By nature he is the type of person who prizes "l'obtenu, non le naturel", and the illegitimate child, this child of nature about whom Edouard was so optimistic is coming into the care of a person most likely to oppose natural qualities, or to inspire the kind of harmful rebellion which Gides sees as the inevitable result in so many families. A Douviers seems an unlikely candidate to nurture the child of nature that will come into his hands, and the reader notices that it is Edouard, in a seemingly objective and eminently fair-minded and reasoned tone, who gives this impression. If Edouard can judge the capacities of another in this respect, can he himself fulfill the role more adequately?

In any case, this bachelor will not be called upon to accept an infant son into his household to raise as his own; but Gide does cast him in such a role of influence over a young person, in this case his nephew Olivier. But the influence will be under circumstances roundly condemned by the social order since Edouard's interest in Olivier is that of a lover rather than a father; and if this influence is not considered salutary, there is no spokesman for such a point of view. On the contrary, it is Olivier's mother Pauline who

both recognizes the situation and gives an explanation of her approval. When she visits Edouard and Olivier, she answer's Edouard's confusion and blushes by saying "Votre rougeur est éloquente. . . .Mon pauvre ami, n'attendez pas de moi des reproches. Je vous en ferais si vous ne l'aimiez pas. . . ."[13] And although Edouard thinks to himself that she is merely accepting with cordiality and good grace a situation which she rèally cannot alter, she goes on to give an explanation of the desirability of this homosexual situation in which an older man effects a liaison with an adolescent boy:

> --En ne me scandalisant pas tout à l'heure, je crains de vous avoir scandalisé. Il est certaines libertés de pensée dont les hommes voudraient garder le monopole. Je ne puis pourtant pas feindre avec vous plus de réprobation que je n'en éprouve. La vie m'a instruite. J'ai compris combien la pureté des garçons restait précaire, alors même qu'elle paraissait le mieux préservée. De plus, je ne crois pas que les plus chastes adolescents fassent plus tard les maris les meilleurs; ni même, hélas, les plus fidèles, ajouta-t-elle en souriant tristement. Enfin, l'exemple de leur père m'a fait souhaiter d'autres vertus pour mes fils. Mais j'ai peur pour eux de la débauche, ou des liaisons dégradantes. Olivier se laisse facilement entraîner. Vous aurez à coeur de le retenir. Je crois que vous pourrez lui faire du bien. Il ne tient qu'à vous. . . .[14]

Pauline is apparently willing to hand over her son to Edouard in full recognition of the influence which Olivier

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[13] Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 397.

[14] Ibid., pp. 397-398.

has received from his father up to this time. She has seen her role in the family as that of keeping the children as ignorant as possible of the weaknesses and insufficiencies of their father and of maintaining an atmosphere of respect for her husband, a respect about which she herself is quietly and resignedly ironic. Pauline echoes quite exactly the idea of Dr. Corydon that it is better for an adolescent to receive his sexual initiation and first experiences of a love affair from an understanding older man who will have the boy's best interests at heart.[15] This style of homosexual initiation is seen by Corydon as a salutary preparation for marriage, one that is more beneficial than relationships with prostitutes or with older women who have their own selfish pleasures as their first consideration; and Corydon further elaborates his idea by ruling out premarital sexual relationships, for example with the intended fiancée, when he roundly condemns this notion as it is suggested in the book by Léon Blum which discusses various alterations to the then-existing customs of courtship and marriage.

Pauline does not elaborate these particular ideas and does not specifically expound on Olivier's experiences with Edouard as a preparation for a heterosexual marriage in due course; but what she adds as a kind of validation of the

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[15]Harold March raises a logical objection to both the thesis of Dr. Corydon and the analysis of Olivier's situation by his mother: "The proposal disregards the general principle, admitted by Gide elsewhere in his treatise, that sexual practice

situation is the personal conviction that this liaison will be beneficial in that it will enable her son to break the pattern of conduct which has formed her husband Oscar. She has been forced to face the marital situation in which she must accept his infidelities as if she and the rest of the family were sweetly igornant of them--as suited their roles as the chaste wife and the innocent children. It might, however, be pointed out that Pauline tends to accept this new situation with Edouard with the same passivity as she has accepted the self-satisfied obtuseness of her husband in the past, and that Oscar Molinier has been allowed to follow his natural bent with virtually no opposition. Her lack of revolt tended to leave all her sons very much to their own devices in coping with a position where they would have to act within a framework of false values and practise the kind of subterfuge that has led Vincent to total ruin and which has involved George in partial responsibility for the suicide of Boris.

But if all the bourgeois wives which Gide pictures tend to have a good deal more insight into the hypocrisy of their husbands than do those husbands themselves, they are not all as passive in their acceptance of the situation. While Pauline Molinier has dutifully accepted the homelife which her husband

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tends to stabilize in the direction where it has first found satisfaction; to inoculate a youth with homsexual tastes seems an odd way to prepare him for matrimony". H. March, Gide and the Hound of Heaven (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), p. 178.

has necessitated, Marguérite Profitendieu has rebelled, first by taking the lover who fathered Bernard and secondly by leaving her husband, this event taking place near the conclusion of the book. The first episode merely lasted ten days, and although there is no time limit on the second leave-taking, since it is still in force when the book ends, this latter decision on the part of Mme Profitendieu has the effect of re-uniting Bernard with Profitendieu, and Bernard moves back into the houe in which he was raised. It can be seen as ironic that Mme Profitendieu and not Mme Molinier should be the one to leave the stiflingly pompous and false atmosphere of her husband's home, since it is Molinier who is shown to be the more completely immersed in the patriarchal mythology of his own making. Bernard has come to appreciate that there are glimmerings of good sense and praiseworthy sensibilities in Profitendieu, although sympathy for his father's rather pitiable position is no small motive in Bernard's decision to return to his deserted stepfather.

Just as Molinier and Douviers had unburdened and revealed themselves to Edouard, so Profitendieu pours out his heart to the novelist for a few moments on the subject of raising sons in general and Bernard in particular. Profitendieu blends honest concern and fatherly affection with patriarchal pomposity:

> --Ces jeunes gens, reprenait Profitendieu, s'élancent dans la vie sans savoir à quoi ils s'exposent. L'ignorance des dangers

> fait leur force, sans doute. Mais nous qui savons, nous les pères, nous tremblons pour eux. Notre sollicitude les irrite, et le mieux est de ne pas trop la leur laisser voir. Je sais qu'elle s'exerce bien importunément et maladroitement quelquefois. Plutôt que répéter sans cesse à l'enfant que le feu brûle, consentons à le laisser un peu se brûler. L'expérience instruit plus sûrement que le conseil. J'ai toujours accordé le plus de liberté possible à Bernard. Jusqu'à l'amener à croire, hélas! que je ne me souciais pas beaucoup de lui. Je crains qu'il s'y soit mépris; de là sa fuite. Même alors, j'ai cru bon de le laisser faire; tout en veillant sur lui de loin, sans qu'il s'en doute. Dieu merci, je disposais de moyens pour cela.16

Albéric Profitendieu, as usual, cannot drop his mask for any length of time. He must make it clear again and again to Edouard that he is amongst those who "know", and he cannot help but return to the means which he has at hand to keep a watch on Bernard, the police force of which he is so proud; but in the midst of these pretentious recurring themes and the clichés on child-rearing, he displays the real affection which he has for Bernard, an affection which he has earlier confessed as being in excess of that which he felt for his own children and which Bernard was, at the beginning of the book, so quick to dismiss as non-existent. The judge has been perceptive enough to realize this fact about their relationship, and Bernard's return to his home would seem to be a complete affirmation of the genuineness of this affection.

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16 Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 428.

But if this affection is genuine, then it is possible that the practice of showing the son a freedom to learn by potentially dangerous experience has genuinely been Profitendieu's conscious policy and not some after-the-fact cliché, an excuse to explain away the situation that has developed. Or is the reader to believe that it is Bernard's illegitimacy which has in some undefined manner been his saving grace, and that this fact alone has saved him from the stifling, smothering potential that was complete and unredeemed in Profitendieu's household?

It is clear that the legitimate sons--Vincent, Armand, and even Olivier and George--have either gone wrong completely or are in a much more problematic position than is the illegitimate son, Bernard. But if he has been disposed by nature not to resemble the father in whose house he was raised, is this rather mystical fact sufficient reason why the process of his revolt and subsequent reconciliation should be a salutary one?

When Gide endowed a Lafcadio with the same fact of illegitimacy as he did a Bernard, he also granted Lafcadio an infinitely freer, more varied upbringing. Lafcadio was a natural child who had a natural and essentially non-patriarchal upbringing in the sense of being raised by a rather haphazard succession of his mother's lovers. Bernard, on the other hand, had every appearance of the legitimate son of an ordered and established household; and he himself only realized his position in late adolescence when, presumably, the greatest part of his formation was complete, a formation against which he decided

to rebel at the accidental finding of a packet of letters.

Bernard's upbringing is unquestionably the more conventional, and thus by Gidian definition the more stifling and ruinous; and yet the reader must confront the fact that Lafcadio, with no need to face the apparently dangerous process of revolt against his conventional family, is the one to engage in extreme acts of goodness, such as the rescue of children, and also an act of murder, an extreme action whether it is defined as evil or gratuitous. It is Bernard, who has been raised in the more conventional manner, who maintains an honourable and reasonably easy equilibrium when faced with the various good and evil choices that are presented to him as he carried out his adventures. When Bernard returns to his father's house, there does not appear to be any sense of foreboding in the action; or it may simply be that Edouard, who reports this in the final paragraph of the novel, has lost interest in Bernard's situation.

Just as casually reported, but not so easily dismissed as unproblematic, is the return of Armand to the combined household and school, presided over by the arch-patriarch of the novel who sits in his upstairs room--"the master counterfeiter and his mint--pious old Azaïs and his establishment. . . .All the major characters in the book wander through the precincts of the school".[17] But it has been Armand's unhappy

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[17]Brée, p. 240.

fate to have been born within this establishment; and when he gives up his projected flight to Africa to return to his family duty in saving the school that the parents are abandoning because of the suicide scandal, there is less of a sense of the Prodigal returning to safety than of the newly liberated prisoner who is returning of his own free will to the prison where the warping process into which he was unluckily born must inevitably continue.

CHAPTER V

L'ECOLE DES FEMMES: WIVES AND DAUGHTERS IN REVOLT

As witnesses of the young men's attempts at revolt against traditional values, it would seem that the women, both young and middle-aged, of Les Faux-Monnayeurs must be feeling pushed to the point of rebellion themselves. But although all the characters of the novel are closely held within a rigidly stable, ordered and codified middle-class society, the women are held in such a manner that their possibility of successfully and happily changing their status is obviously slighter than that of the young men. These young men are attempting to fulfill their own personalities by rejecting the values that would make them copies of their fathers, and have an infinitely greater chance of doing so because, among other things, their society has granted them the male prerogative of taking action independently, outside the restrictions of traditional family roles. One daughter, Sarah Vedel, is planning to rebel against such a conservative role; she has planned and will have some success in carrying out an emancipation in which she sets out to dare everything, to grant herself liberty and even license. She has steeled herself to act in this manner during her stay in England and shares her resolve with a Miss Aberdeen, the English boarder in the family school. But it is an Englishwoman's ruthless

and ultimately unhappy revolt against the traditions of society that is brought most completely to the reader's attention. This is the history of Lady Lilian Griffith, who has left her husband in the background while she follows her own pursuits, the key ethic of which is a ruthless sacrifice of others to achieve her own purposes. Lilian's extreme behaviour is no doubt in part necessitated by the precarious nature of her position as a woman on her own, determined to play a role differing from that of social convention; and, in the end, she cannot carry off her singleminded purpose.

Lilian, however, is from an aristocratic world, and this is not the world of the majority of Gide's husbands and wives. Throughout Les Caves du Vatican, La Symphonie Pastorale, Les Faux-Monnayeurs and L'Ecole des Femmes, the principal characters are exclusively from the world of judges, teachers, pastors, priests and writers. Germaine Brée comments:

> Gide merely eliminated from his story all economic or social considerations. His characters interest him only so far as they are connected with the self-appointed guardians of the ethical values embodied in the law, the church and the educational system.
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> Nothing in the Counterfeiters suggests that the earth is not peopled entirely by persons of this type, and this is perhaps a weakness. Rare are the novels with characters so far removed from the concerns of average human beings.[1]

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[1] Brée, p. 235.

And thus when one reads a critique of middle-class values in Gide's works one must take into consideration that no other system is really even considered by Gide. Gide was writing of his own milieu, but it would be strange to suppose that the author himself was as unaware of the nature of the life of the poor classes as was his characters. Bernard, for example, wanders into a working-class district and is saddened by these surroundings; but he apparently leaves them again to return as before to his own world without changing his thinking or personal pursuits. The other characters, less sensitive and often less perceptive than Bernard, are even more solidly entrenched in middle-class life. But when Edouard, as he records in his journal, looks at a lower-class mother and child he sees the same smothering protection, the same desire of the parent to insulate the child and make her life revolve exclusively around that of her mother; and Edouard's reaction is to be somewhat indulgent of this woman's shortcomings, giving the suggestion that she really could not be expected to do better. Edouard, and Gide himself, would not be prepared to show such indulgence to the educated upper middle classes, whose similar folly (and much more) is not to be excused on grounds of naïveté or lack of education. Middle-class shortcomings are to be exposed with full ruthlessness.

A. J. Guérard analyses Gide's portrayal of husbands and wives thus:

> Nearly every respectable middle-aged husband in Gide's fiction is scheming, pompous, or

> stupid; nearly every middle-aged wife is kindly, suffering, and resigned. They remain in the shadows of these stories of emancipation, as do the younger wives and sweethearts: the timid, conservative, and protecting influences on men and children. These women must be left behind, but are always to be pitied.2

And Guérard goes on to speculate as to the reasons for Gide's "surprising charity toward women, the sworn enemies of individualism",[3] and mentions the duality of Gide's personal feelings towards the women of his childhood, his mother and his governess Anna Shacklton, as a possible explanation. But in characterizing Gide's attitude toward these middle-aged and middle-class women as charitable, it is also necessary to point out that the author's attitude is not one of smiling indulgence--the attitude presumably of the middle-aged husbands--but of positive admiration. At the same time as the wives of Les Faux-Monnayeurs are carrying on a conscious campaign of self-effacement in dealing with their husbands, it becomes clear, at least in the analysis of Edouard, that these women are unmistakably superior to their husbands.

Both Marguérite Profitendieu and Pauline Molinier have, in one way or another, rebelled against the values and character of their respective husbands. It is not clear whether Mme Profitendieu's two flights from her husband's

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[2]Guérard, p. 157.

[3]Ibid., p. 157.

home have been entirely motivated by an awareness of her husband's pomposity and essential falseness in keeping up bourgeois appearances. Since the second escape is not a youthful escapade but is based on the mature reflection of a woman her age, it is a clear sign of the false position which she judges her marriage necessitates for her. Gide merely reports her separation from Profitendieu, and uses it as a means of re-uniting Bernard with his step-father; but if this is an act of revolt on the part of Mme Profitendieu it is one that has occurred very late in her life and no doubt represents little more than the significance of an after-thought.

Pauline Molinier, on the other hand, chooses to remain within her family, continuing to face both the clumsy deception of her hsuband and the growing hostility of her children; and when she conceives her role as the patiently resigned director of this human comedy of the family, Edouard is clearly moved to admiration, both for the feminine qualities of abnegation which she displays and for the insight into her husband's nature which she has been forced to acquire. She has learned to ask less and less of the people around her and to demand more and more of herself, but this process has had to be combined with one of constant dissembling to avoid acknowledging the shortcomings of her husband and children; and she finally reaches the point of seeming to hide her love itself, since the dissembling process has become such a domi-

nant feature of the household. She is distressed at the hostility and defiance which her son George, just beginning his adolescent years, is disposed to show her; but whether or not this attitude is natural rebellion and in effect salutary for George, he will be returned to his mother's influence, filled with remorse at his part in the conception of the suicide pact which resulted in Boris' death. This dramatic event had produced an essentially false situation, but one that is not greatly out of line with the atmosphere of subterfuge and counterfeit emotions which Pauline has felt forced to create around her in her family life.

Even in the full recognition of the counterfeiting process which Pauline Molinier has decided to adopt as a means of coping with her marital situation, the reader is likely to come to a tacit judgment that in the Molinier household, the wife is morally and even intellectually superior to her husband. This theme of the superior wife becomes unmistakable, however, when the reader see the marriage of Laura Douviers who is one generation younger than Mme Profitendieu and Mme Molinier; and this superiority is underlined by the fact that she feels morally at fault for having involved herself in the affair with Vincent which has resulted in her pregnancy. Edouard explains the result of her sense of guilt and desire to show sincere repentance:

> L'admirable, c'est que, par regret de sa faute, par repentir, Laura voulait s'humilier devant lui; mais lui se prosternait aussitôt plus bas

> qu'elle; tout ce que l'un et l'autre en faisaient ne parvenait qu'à le rapetisser, qu'à la grandir.4

Edouard thus agrees with Bernard's notion, which directly preceded this statement about the inevitable nature of the relationship between Laura and Félix Douviers. Bernard had stated that the marital drama of the two consisted in the fact that, do what they might, the two people could never be on an equal footing since the husband would automatically--even instinctively--show himself inferior in every situation. And if it is true that, speaking of Gide's Les Faux-Monnayeurs, "nothing is lacking to his human comedy but an intelligent and middle-aged 'good citizen' and a happily married couple",[5] the issue of the seemingly inevitable inequality of the two partners is always present. What is more, this situation in Les Faux-Monnayeurs is the marital pattern which all the characters accept; and in the case of the husbands, there is really no reason why they should even be aware that it is basically unsatisfactory or that their wives and families are being seriously warped and made tragically unhappy by such a marital siutation. But in 1929, three years after the publication of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, Gide published L'Ecole des Femmes and Robert; and he completed these two explorations of a bourgeois marital drama as a trilogy with the publication

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[4]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 394.

[5]Guérard, p. 154.

in 1936 of Geneviève.

In these three works Gide resumed a study of the marital problems presented in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, and indeed confined himself exclusively to these problems. In Les Faux-Monnayeurs, however, the reader saw many of these problematic family situations through the journals of Edouard, so that such situations inevitably took on a quality of one-sided reportage. A type of journal form was also employed in L'Ecole des Femmes Robert, and Geneviève; but here it is the personal diary of the wife and subsequent letters of defence and explanation by the husband and daughter which form this trilogy of bourgeois marriage patterns. Each character speaks on his own behalf and in his own manner, and it would seem to be the intention to present some kind of objective picture of this family once the three characters have stated their respective cases. Speaking in his own words, each character would, whatever his intended purpose, finally produce a combined justification and condemnation of himself and of the two other characters involved in the explanation. But this complex format resulted in a disappointment for Gide who summarized the trilogy as "unspeakably mediocre";[6] and A. J. Guérard gives this analysis of the shortcomings of this "dreary trilogy of novelettes":[7]

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[6]Gide, Journals (30 Jan., 1949) trans. and quoted by Justin O'Brien, p. 328.

[7]Guérard, p. 144.

> They. . .help explain the violence of Gide's attack on cautious and protecting institutions: the church, the family, the home. But their only critical interest is negative. They show how serious the threat of the "roman-à-thèse" had always been for Gide, and how totally he failed when he tried to dramatize from within the feelings of persons very different from himself. . . . Gide could bring such persons as Eveline and Geneviève to life if he looked at them from the outside, with pity or mild amusement. He did so with Pauline and Sarah in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. But only the grotesque satire of Anthime Armand-Dubois could have saved Robert. All of Gide's suppleness and intellect vanishes when he tries to convey, seriously and subjectively, the arguments of his opponents.[8]

But this is not to deny that these three works do not give further elaboration of Gide's continuing criticism of the family as an institution or that they are not in line with the portrayal of husbands, wives and children seen in the more artistically successful Caves du Vatican or Faux-Monnayeurs. If Gide fails, as Guérard suggests, because he cannot convey the arguments of his opponents convincingly, it must be noticed that in presenting these arguments Gide never escapes showing the irony of both positions at once. The reader never escapes the realization that he is seeing three equally foolish characters trying to convince others of the essential rightness of his own position.

And if a tally of points gained and points lost in the presentation of the arguments were possible, the reader is likely to see that the portrayal of the obtuse, pompous

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[8]Guérard, pp. 144-145.

and reactionary bourgeois husband that was drawn in Les Faux-Monnayeurs is sufficiently reinforced as to show Robert the loser; but the issue is too complex for the posting of such a result at the end of the three arguments, although it is clear that each wishes to present a victorious claim as to the essential rightness of his position.

When Eveline, for example, sets out to show that her husband is a typical representative of the bourgeois husband made familiar by Gide's Albéric Profitendieu and Oscar Molinier, she also must admit to her own girlish silliness in the unquestioning and romanticized admiration she held for her husband at the time of their marriage. Unlike the reader, she is completely overwhelmed by the subterfuges which Robert, as is automatic to him, adopts to display his self-importance. He makes sweeping moral lessons out of the keeping of a personal journal, and then actually neglects to bother to write anything; he makes much of the orderliness and originality of a filing system which illustrates his business skill but which in fact is a system readily available in stationery stores. For him such pretense is second nature; it is the hollow play-acting which maintains him in his society; but his young wife is even more taken in by the sham than he is himself, and is thus doomed to a disillusionment the extent of which he cannot truly appreciate. Eveline becomes slowly aware of Robert's shortcomings, and like Pauline Molinier, becomes something of a social critic in doing do. She says:

> Car Robert n'est pas un hypocrite. Les sentiments qu'il exprime, il s'imagine réellement les avoir. Et même je crois qu'en fin de compte il les éprouve, et qu'ils répondent à son appel, les plus beaux, les plus généreux, les plus nobles, toujours exactement ceux qu'il convient d'avoir, ceux qu'il est avantageux d'avoir.
>
> Je doute que beaucoup de gens s'y puissent laisser prendre; mais ils font tout comme. Une sorte de convention s'établit, et l'on n'est peut-être pas tant dupe que l'on ne fait semblant de l'être, pour plus de commodité.9

Also like Pauline Molinier, Eveline has gained an enlightenment that goes beyond that of many members of her society. She is appalled, for example, that her father, who had been criticial of Robert some twenty years previous to this, now is duly impressed with him and takes sides with his son-in-law against his daughter. She must face the bitter realization that she considers her son Gustave as self-seeking, materialistic and snobbish as his father. The poison has passed from one generation to the next without any dilution, and Eveline's diary ends with the pessimistic revelation of her father, who tells her that he too had never found his marriage satisfactory, and that his only suggestion is that there should be less communication from one generation to the other on this subject in order that the pessimism should not spread.

Thus Eveline has a rather full realization of her

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[9]Gide, L'Ecole des Femmes (18th ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 60.

position, but acts on this realization in a very incomplete fashion, since she gives up her plans to leave Robert when she is won back to a kind of new sympathy for him at the time of an auto accident he suffers. He is as pompous as ever, but is as clever a play-actor as well; and although his sentiments are as sententious as ever, Eveline is somewhat convinced that she in fact still loves her husband. She finally decides to stay with him when he displays another side of his character, his weakness, because he collapses in abject, tearful sorrow and self-pity when she attempts to make a final separation. This action convinces her that he in fact loves her, and this seems sufficient reason for her to stay.

And when Robert gives his version of their marriage together, he shows that this apparent display of weakness is not at all inconsistent. He reminds the reader that the majestic qualities of character which Eveline as his fiancée and young bride imagined were in fact her own creation. He explains that he was a typical product of his environment and that this necessarily involved the maintaining of appearances, and would not allow for the correction of a mistakenly favourable impression. But at the same time it is clear to the reader that the establishment of such impressions was very much part of Robert's way of life. There is, however, the redeeming hint that Robert has adopted this way of life as a means of survival in an environment that has ruthlessly demanded such subterfuge. He explains that he has risen from

a rather dreary social position as a boy raised in a provincial setting by his mother after the death of her husband. He tells of a life and education of careful probity, and a career of hard work which had been necessitated by meagre talents. This is no doubt the truth, but he also tells that his great industry and priggish self-restraint made him the butt of accusations of hypocrisy because people chose to have a falsely high impression of him, one which he would not profess for himself. Thus the reader sees that there is the possibility of the blending of inadequacy and social conventions to produce a hypocrite, rather than a ruthless and cynical pursuit of such a career. It may indeed be that Robert became as he is through the process he describes, but in any case he displays the typical ideas and mannerisms of the worst of his type. Like Oscar Molinier, he has never seen any reason to change his hypocritical, self-satisfied and reactionary ideas. Thus there is little to distinguish him from the typical bourgeois husbands of Les Caves du Vatican and Les Faux-Monnayeurs; but he does broach in some detail the subject of the raising and educating of his daughter. He does not give special mention of the education of his son Gustave, and this is a reasonable affirmation of Eveline's judgment that the son is unhappily very much like his father. Robert simply mentions that Gustave is admirably docile and gratifyingly amenable to the influence of his father; but he is far from contented with the turn his daughter's intellectual

development has taken.

In regard to a woman's education for her role in life, Robert clearly wishes to keep the woman's attention away from a wider vision of the world in the name of decency and seemly feminine behaviour. Eveline, however, is an active conspirator against such an intellectual development for her daughter, and she is determined that her daughter will have the freedom of intellectual formation which she herself has come to so very late, and which even then Robert finds morally undesirable. Robert raises the subject in the following discussion with his wife:

> --Ces derniers temps tu t'es accordé, pour tes lectures, des libertés, lui dis-je, que j'espère bien ne pas te voir accorder à nos enfants.
> --J'espère bien, me répondit-elle abruptement, qu'ils sauront les prendre d'eux-mêmes.
> Il y avait du défi dans sa voix et je sentais que cette phrase excédait sa pensée. Je ne voulus y voir qu'une boutade, mais que je me devais de ne pas laisser sans riposte:
> --Heureusement que je suis là, dis-je un peu sévèrement. Le rôle des parents est de protéger leurs enfants. Ils pourraient s'empoisonner sans le savoir, céder à de malsaines curiosités.10

And Robert is really only rather timidly remonstrating against an influence which he has deplored for some time. He has spoken of the education of his daughter Geneviève in these terms:

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[10]Gide, L'Ecole des Femmes, p. 129.

> Sous prétexte de la préparer pour ses examens, Eveline l'encourageait dans des lectures qui désolaient l'abbé Bredel et qui me faisaient protester contre l'instruction que l'on donne aux femmes aujourd'hui, dont le plus souvent elles n'ont que faire. Je crois que leur cerveau n'est point fait pour de pareilles nourritures et ne sait point fournir un antidote naturel pour neutraliser ces poisons.[11]

Clearly Robert has strange--though not atypical--ideas about the nature of women's brains; and this foolishness on his part represents little genuine threat to the revolt of his wife and daughter against the conservative ideas which both Robert and, the reader notices, the church uphold. The fact that Robert and Bredel are allies in condemning the education which Eveline and Geneviève are pursuing is a reminder that the most conservative and by Gidian definition the most undesirable influences of the family are often most compatible with the idea of the established church. But the wives portrayed in Les Caves du Vatican, for example, equalled and even excelled the religious zeal of their husbands; revolt from either their families or their church was the furthest thing from their minds. Eveline has clearly moved away from their obedient position, but is not about to make any radical moves herself. She will eventually leave her husband to sacrifice herself in a wartime hospital for dangerous contagious illnesses, but in this way she is really

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[11]Gide, L'Ecole des Femmes, pp. 122-123.

only continuing her spirit of self-sacrifice. She no longer can bring herself to carry out this self-sacrifice on behalf of her husband and his false values, but she is equally unable to pursue a career of self-fulfillment. She does, however, make a conscious effort to instill in her daughter both the desire and the intellectual preparation for a more independent existence, one quite different from her own.

Educated liberally in literature and the sciences and allowed to associate with people whom her father found undesirable, Geneviève learns to abominate the spirit of sacrifice that is held up to her as the proper role of the wife in marriage. One of Geneviève's school friends, Sara Keller, gives her ideas about marriage:

> . . .Je crois que je n'ai aucune vocation pour l'amour conjugal, par exemple.
> --Oh! je ne veux pas dire que je ne m'éprendrai jamais de quelqu'un. Mais sacrifier pour lui mes goûts, ma vie propre; ne plus m'occuper qu'à lui être agréable, qu'à le servir. . . .
> --Quelle drôle d'idée tu te fais du mariage!
> --Mais non; je t'assure que c'est presque toujours comme ça. Une fois mariée, on n'a plus de temps pour rien de ce qui vous intéressait d'abord. Il n'y en a plus que pour le ménage; et pour les enfants, si l'on en a.12

And even if Sara's ideas state a feminist position in a juvenile and over-simplified fashion, they are bound to have a very real personal affect on Geneviève for a number of reasons. Geneviève has more than a feeling of personal friendship for the beautiful Sara; she has homosexual desires

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[12]Gide, L'Ecole des Femmes, pp. 189-190.

for her as well, although she is not, it would seem, overtly aware of this. Secondly, Sara comes from a milieu that must seen extremely emancipated to Geneviève, since it is an artistic one and in it her family life is quite irregular. Her mother and father are not legally married; the mother is a former model of the father and Sara has also modelled for her father. This couple is very happily, though not legally, united; but the very fact that they are Jewish is enough to render them unacceptable to Robert, who stiffly puts up with them socially and thus allows a direct comparison of himself with this more liberal people, a comparison which is unfavourable to him in the eyes of Geneviève.

A similarly unfavourable comparison is made by Geneviève between her father and Dr. Marchant. This same style of comparison had been made years earlier by Eveline, who admits having been in love with the doctor a short while before she dies. Eveline has arranged to have Dr. Marchant act as Geenviève's tutor, and his homelife makes the following impression on Geneviève:

> Madame Marchant avait été l'amie d'enfance de ma mère. Modeste jusqu'à l'effacement, presque insignifiante, du moins la voyais-je telle à cette époque de ma vie, car j'avais en ce temps peu de goût pour découvrir ce qui se cache sous l'apparence des êtres et méprisais la modestie; si mon père représentait pour moi le type d'homme que je ne voulais pour rien au monde épouser, madame Marchant représentait le type de femme que je ne voulais point être. Rien ne justifiait à mes yeux l'amour que lui témoignait le docteur; elle me paraissait négligeable. Elle vivait dans l'ombre et la dévotion de son mari. Le ménage

> était assurément des plus unis, en dépit des cyniques propos du docteur qui tenait le mariage pour 'une institution ridicule'.13

Thus it can be seen that Geneviève's feminist viewpoint is based almost entirely on negative examples, and ones that are seen within her own family or close social group. Such positive examples as the suffragette movement were in existence, but rebellion against the basis of family values themselves was a matter that a young woman at the time of the First World War might very well have had to work out for herself. In any case, Geneviève is largely without any positive mentor or example; and she conceives the idea of having a child outside marriage as a means, presumably, of asserting her personal freedom from the confines of family life and at the same time of fulfilling her role as a woman. She approaches Dr. Marchant as a possible candidate to father the child since he has expressed emancipated or at least cynical theoretical views on the subject of marriage. The doctor refuses to be a part of this social experiment, however, and Geneviève is seen to be really at the very earliest beginning of confronting the feminist problem of finding a role for herself which would not involve the degradation and sacrifice on the wife's part that Geneviève sees as an inevitable part of family life and which she refuses to accept; and her reconciliation with her mother

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[13]Gide, L'Ecole des Femmes, pp. 221-222.

some few weeks before the death of Eveline does not suggest any acceptance of the way of life to which Eveline has unhappily submitted. At this same period of the war, Robert--through typical smug manipulation--has established himself very comfortably and safely in a wartime position of rather hollow prestige, an action which his wife finds shockingly hypocritical and indeed so dishonourable that she enters the dangerous hospital service in which she subsequently dies.

Thus Gide illustrates yet another means of bringing an unhappy marriage to a conclusion, a conclusion in which the husband's essentially false moral position is shown to stand him in good stead. The wife, who on balance represents a more tenable moral position, is made to suffer even by the dissolution of the marriage which had been so unsatisfactory for her; and this pattern of unsatisfactory marriage--even in its black-and-white extremes of moral judgment--can be argued as typical of many aspects of Gide's portrayal of family life.

For the conflicts that become intolerable in Robert and Eveline's household are really of a rather rarefied type, and the bourgeois social milieu which Gide portrays quite exclusively can be seen to account for much of this. The reader finds no stress caused by economic difficulties in these households which are, by definition, quite well-to-do; an Anthime Armand-Dubois in Les Caves du Vatican suffered a financial setback when he became so devout that he could no longer publish rather blasphemous articles, but such a

financial situation created no major difficulty. The atmosphere of obvious privilege which surrounds Gide's characters merely retreats for a moment from the Armand-Dubois household, while the ironic point is made that they were better off when the husband was an agnostic and the wife was, theoretically, in opposition to him.

The bourgeois setting also establishes an atmosphere of education and refinement in which vociferous bickering would seem virtually impossible. The middle-aged couples are habitually polite, it would seem, and the bickering that is seen in the La Pérouse household of Les Faux-Monnayeurs is a phenomenon of old age, even of senility, although Gide makes the point clear that we are seeing a marriage that was based on a youthful love-match and which has degenerated with painful slowness into an endless round of petty quarrels. But in general the discussions between the husband and wife, if the deferring wife does not simply keep silent, are on a rather high plane in both subject and tone. Eveline and Robert make this type of exchange, for example:

> --Que veux-tu, mon ami, me disait-elle alors, avec ce qui lui restait encore de tendresse, nous ne nous dirigeons pas vers le même ciel.
> Et je protestais qu'il ne pouvait pas plus y avoir deux ciels qu'il n'y avait deux Dieux, et que ce mirage vers lequel elle s'acheminait, qu'elle appelait son ciel, ne pouvait être que mon enfer, que l'enfer.[14]

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[14]Gide, L'Ecole des Femmes, p. 142.

And if the discussion between Robert and Eveline on the matter of reading materials and of the education of the children tends to be a little sharper, there is no evidence--from any of the three who give their version of the marriage--that such discussions are anything but reasoned and quite intellectualized in tone. Emotionalism is, of course, present; Robert, for example, rather unexpectedly bursts into tears when his wife tells him that she intends to leave him, but in general there is an overall feeling that dissatisfaction is based on rational analysis of moral failings on the part of the marital partner. When Robert speculates as to the diminishing love of his wife, there is an unmistakable feeling that he is speaking of a rather cool and measured concept, one in which irrational emotional response is somehow not really involved.

Equally outside serious consideration would seem to be the issue of physical attraction or sexual compatibility; and the observer of the middle-aged couples in Les Caves du Vatican and Les Faux-Monnayeurs should not be surprised at this feature of L'Ecole des Femmes. If there is a suspicion that these foolish bourgeois husbands are sexually foolish as well, there is little evidence in any detail, although Amédée Fleurissoire of Les Caves du Vatican is a noteworthy and comic exception.

The fact that this bourgeois husband with the comic name of Fleurissoire has his first sexual experience with a

prostitute with the come-hither name of Carola Venitequa makes clear the burlesque nature of this encounter. Equally burlesque, but perhaps less conventional than the meeting with Carola, is the pact regarding his sexual life that Fleurissoire had made at the time of his engagement. Here too the sense of comic exaggeration is made clear by the ridiculous names of the participants in this pact, since Fleurissoire swears to his best friend, Gaston Blafaphas, that in view of their long-standing friendship and the fact that they were rivals for the hand of Mme Fleurissoire, née Arnica Péterat, Fleurissoire promises never to claim his conjugal rights. The narrator of the novel tells us that even Blafaphas was somewhat taken aback by this gesture, but at no time is Arnica's opinion in the matter ever raised as a possible point of objection. Once again the reader meets a wife who is never consulted as to her role in the marital situation, this time in a comic presentation in contrast with the tragic nature of Marceline's marital life in L'Immoraliste.

But the basic position of the wife remains the same. She stands in the background while her fate is decided by her husband, and Gide--largely through keeping her attitude completely out of the picture--gives once again the portrayal of the self-effacing wife. Gide does not portray the wife in rebellion against such a situation as this, a situation that came closer to his own married life; and when Eveline of L'Ecole des Femmes or Pauline Molinier of Les Faux-Monnayeurs

voice their objections to their husband's shortcomings, such objections are seemingly less against sexual infidelity, as in the case of Oscar Molinier, than against the moral issue of the hypocrisy which such infidelity necessitates. In the case of Eveline, her objections in regard to Robert are more violent than Pauline's, and they are based entirely on moral issues. Gide would appear to be tacitly portraying the wife--the virtuous, marriagable woman--as having no physically sexual side to her nature which has to be satisfied. Gide's statement to Denis de Rougement, quoted earlier in this text, admitted that he had long considered women in this way, and that he had come to regard such an attitude as erroneous only late in his life.

Thus Gide's characters would seem to reflect the idea of the desirability of a strict separation of spiritual love and physical passion in marriage. An André Walter pursues this idea to the point of madness, and Michel of L'Immoraliste tries to come to some kind of practical arrangement with this idea within an actual marriage, and the results, for his wife, would be equally tragic; but the vast majority of Gide's characters, while not carrying such a position to the extreme of these earlier characters, do not appear to contradict the basic premise. Max Marchand gives this approach to Gide's fictional representation of marriage a very direct, even sinister, application to the author's personal life:

> Pour amener Madeleine à ses vues, Gide pense qu'il faudra lui enseigner deux choses. C'est d'une part qu'il est possible de dissocier la sensualité de l'amour et, d'autre part, que la femme, pour des raisons psychologiques et physiologiques, n'a pas les mêmes exigences que l'homme. C'est sur de telles idées qu'il va bâtir son oeuvre littéraire.
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> . . .Le voici donc, prenant son parti de séparer le plaisir et l'amour. Il lui semble d'ailleurs que la chose est souhaitable parce que le plaisir sera plus intense si rien de sentimental ne s'y mêle et l'amour plus durable et plus parfait si le coeur se trouve soustrait aux appétits charnels.15

In such a pattern of marriage in which both husband and wife accepted the satisfaction of physical appetites as a separate issue, the man would of course be free to satisfy his own appetites completely as he chose. The principal aspect of the marriage would be the spiritual esteem which the two would share, and the man's extra-marital sexual affairs would presumably not affect this spiritual regard, but would, as Marchand explains, maintain its purity since the vagaries of physical appeal would not encroach upon their relationship. Marchand is perhaps suggesting a formula which would be a justification for Gide's own desire to incorporate homosexual pleasure within the framework of his own marriage. Gide's marriage could thus remain completely asexual as far as Madeleine Gide was concerned. When an Oscar Molinier of Les Faux-Monnayeurs carries on a series of extra-marital, and apparently heterosexual, affairs which are a great source of distress to Pauline Molinier, Gide portrays her as putting

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[15]Marchand, p. 63.

up with this situation with all the virtues of feminine self-abnegation; but she is clearly unhappy with the situation. If it is seriously suggested that women accept this strict separation of the physical and spiritual side of marriage, it can be argued that Gide gives no convincing portrait of women, and indeed intelligent men, who are happy with such a situation.

But in an important sense there is such a separation within the marriages which Gide portrays, because there would appear to be the tacit understanding that the physical drives of women are sufficiently less intense than those of men that they are able, indeed conditioned by body chemistry, to retire to what appears to be a celibate existence once their children have been produced. One remembers that the agony of reconciling the physical and spiritual aspects of love was suffered by André Walter and not by his idealized partner Emmanuèle. It is André who has a nightmarishly graphic awareness of the sordid chemistry of the endocrine system that is the mundane source of his passion. Apparently one is to imagine oneself well within the nineteenth-century understanding that normal, honourable women are not subject to drives of the same proportion as men; and when the wives of Gide's fiction do occasionally stray into extra-marital affairs they apparently do so timidly and without the kind of overwhelming physical drive that might carry them so far as to ensure success. They are filled with guilt, are too socially restrained to maintain either the affair or the separation from the legal family

atmosphere; and when they return they must face up to the immediate stigma and also the far-ranging consequences of having an illegitimate child. The conventions of society and the nature of the woman's sexual role combine to ensure that she must suffer both inside and outside marriage, an institution from which there would seem to be no really satisfactory escape.

When a Geneviève seeks a more emancipated approach to her sexual life, it is apparently not physical desire but rather the maternal instinct which Gide recognizes as her principal motivation. She does not acknowledge any physical desire for Dr. Marchant as the reason for having him father her child; but it is noticed that no sooner has she made the suggestion than she acknowledges to herself at least that she is, and no doubt has been, in love with the doctor. Intellectually and morally admirable in the eyes of Geneviève and--secretly--in the eyes of her mother as well, Dr. Marchant is taken aback by the suggestion. He no doubt recognizes the youth of Geneviève as rendering the situation undesirable, but there is also the clear suggestion that her idea is really far ahead of any thinking he might have done on the subject of the possible behaviour of a woman who is emancipated from the conventions of marriage and family life.

It was Dr. Marchant who had characterized marriage as a ridiculous institution and who had recognized how ridiculous such men as Robert appeared as they flourished within such an

institution, one whose foolishness was proved by the very fact that the fatuous husband was never forced to alter his values as he adjusted to the marital situation. But at the same time as Marchant recognized the husband's inadequacies and presumably sympathized with the wife, he himself remained married to a self-effacing woman who, to Geneviève at least, appeared very inadequate and no match for the qualities seen in Marchant himself. Perhaps a Marchant would not concur, and considered himself on an equal level with the intellectual achievements and what might be termed the moral or spiritual worth of his wife; but it is equally likely that Marchant, for all that he represented the best type of husband, both recognized and accepted the idea and the apparent fact that he was not on an equal footing with his wife, and indeed accepted his superiority to her.

This considerably enlightened man and genuinely worthy husband had clearly not kept pace with the thinking and aspirations of such women in his society as Eveline and Geneviève. The institution of marriage, designed to provide a stable and protective insulation for women and children, had succeeded in insulating his recognition of the changing attitudes of even those women within the direct range of his observation. When one of these women turns to Marchant as a possible ally in creating a destiny for herself that might be more satisfactory than that of the women of her mother's generation, it is clear that he is not only unwilling to become such an ally

but is also very possibly guilty of having uttered empty words in talking of the "ridiculous institution" of marriage. Perhaps the fact that he never scrupled to restrain this kind of talk in front of his wife, a fact which Geneviève found rather surprising, was a clue that his attitude was not so different in quality from that of a Robert as Robert's wife and daughter had hoped. In the end it may well be that all the middle-aged, and indeed younger, men of Gide's fiction share the same imperceptive attitude toward marriage and family life and that their wives--and women in general--are clearly left to their own devices in finding a more satisfactory role within these institutions.

CONCLUSION

As a result of his puritanical nineteenth-century background and no doubt of inherent psychological traits, Gide not only espoused a strict dissociation of physical pleasure and spiritual love as a personal ethic, but he also consistently portrayed such a dissociation as a literary theme. This dissociation has an immediate application to marriage since Gide's characters--suitable candidates or not--see themselves, seemingly as a matter of course, as involved in a marital situation with the object of their rather spiritualized affections.

Les Cahiers d'André Walter illustrate first how fundamental to Gide's thought is this strict dissociation of physical sexuality and moral esteem, and secondly how disastrous this principle can be when carried too far. Such a dissociation will lead to abortive attempts at contracting a marriage or even a tentative engagement, either through the emotional extremes illustrated in André Walter or through the puritanical spirit of self-sacrifice and the relentless, quasi-religious examination of motives that are central to the drama of La Porte Etroite. Such introspection leads to a refined and rarefied approach to life in which an institution such as marriage is seen as so gross that it must constantly be deferred and ultimately abandoned.

When, in L'Immoraliste, a couple finally enters a marriage and when this couple shows a marked similarity to the sensitive couples of André Walter and La Porte Etroite, the disastrous unreality of their marital situation soon becomes apparent. The partners are strangers for all practical purposes and the dissociation of the physical and the spiritual sides of their marriage--one imposed largely by the husband--soon becomes tacitly understood by both parties; but in L'Immoraliste this understanding takes place after the marriage and thus the problem is allowed to advance into a further stage, beyond that of the abortive engagement and the eventual premature death of the spiritualized fiancée which had ended the situation in La Porte Etroite.

A significant aspect of a good deal of Gide's portrayal of husband and wife relationships becomes apparent with L'Immoraliste and La Symphonie Pastorale in which the husband of Gide's fiction takes the centre of the stage and the wife is left in the background, both of the narrative and of her husband's considerations. The wife's role and her happiness are subordinated to the apparently more urgent and important requirements of the husband. She is unconsulted as to her fate, and her fate is to suffer while the husband is belatedly inspired to find his own destiny either in a basically defensible search for self-liberation and self-realization as in L'Immoraliste or, as in the case of the pastor of La Symphonie Pastorale, in selfishly pursuing what he considers to be an

altruistic career.

In Les Faux-Monnayeurs a close examination of a narrow milieu, that of the bourgeois family, continues and expands these themes concerning the husband and wife but adds the further problem of the raising of children. A generation of young men, with a generation of younger brothers behind them, have come to the threhold of maturity in Les Faux-Monnayeurs; and many of these young men are painfully aware of the shortcomings of their fathers both as husbands, fathers and simply as human beings. Gide illustrates the various styles of revolts which they attempt, but he really only points out the direction of their new path as opposed to describing the realities of the new style of life which they feel driven to adopt. Indeed there is the suggestion--in the brief and summarizing final chapter of the book--that many have come to terms with much that is undesirable; and their career of revolt is so brief that they end up, as in L'Enfant Prodigue, dangerously near the paternal house that spawned the difficulty.

The bourgeois middle-aged husband of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, essentially protected in his folly by the very nature of the family institution as Gide illustrates it, can continue along in an obtuse manner, his family and especially his wife quite willing to pardon and hide his shortcomings. The wife remains self-effacing and her attempts at revolt by entering into the kind of adulterous relationship that her husband indulges in

with impunity leads to the bearing of an illegitimate child and her subsequent return to the family in a weaker position than before.

The firstthird of the twentieth century continues to find the husbands and wives in this unequal and undesirable situation, but the trilogy L'Ecole des Femmes, Robert et Geneviève shows the painful process of the women's recognition of their false position and their determination to confront and defy the foolishness and hypocrisy of their husbands and fathers. Gide has thus moved a considerable distance from the spiritualized, self-effacing and self-sacrificing women who had emerged as products of the nineteenth century; but the problems of such women in revolt are stated and defined rather than resolved. The reader is shown that the feminist point of view is really at the early stage of merely confronting its inherent difficulties. The wife and especially the daughter must reconcile their desire for freedom from clearly unjust family roles with the essential and desirable roles of bearing children and developing a satisfactory relationship with men, a relationship that does not, by very definition, involve a degrading subjugation.

The trilogy beginning with L'Ecole des Femmes maintains and indeed intensifies the essentially pessimistic point of view in Gide's portrayal of marriage and family life. Furthermore, this pessimistic attitude is clearly shown to be based on purely moral considerations. The earlier dissociation of

physical love and moral esteem is really still in effect, since the characters are seemingly never at odds in regard to issues of a physical nature; nor is there a serious hint that this is an understood, if hidden, difficulty in the marriage. Equally absent are economic difficulties, since the bourgeois setting makes a comfortable supply of money an understood factor. The accusations made by the husband and wife never leave a rather lofty plan of moral and intellectual considerations; but for Gide these are the telling considerations that weigh so heavily on the husband and wife that they would appear to represent an insoluble problem.

The pessimism of Gide's appraisal of the moral and intellectual shortcomings found in married life is heightened by the fact that now the women, no less than the men, display such lapses of judgment in L'Ecole des Femmes as had not been made evident in the earlier portrayals of married couples. The women show a greater awareness of their difficult position within conventional family life than had been the case in Les Faux-Monnayeurs; but if this awareness is represented as more acute than that of the husbands and if, on balance, the women's position is more defensible than the men's, their superior moral rightness does not save the situation. Gide shows that in the final analysis the wives and daughters are as incapable as the husbands and sons of finding a satisfactory solution to the numerous and subtly complex problems they experience in family life.

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