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# The Body in the Library: Adventures in Realism

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This essay looks at two aspects of the virtual ‘material world’ of realist fiction: objects encountered by the protagonist and the latter’s body. Taking from Sartre two angles on the realist pact by which readers agree to lend their bodies, feelings, and experiences to the otherwise ‘languishing signs’ of the text, it goes on to examine two sets of first-person fictions published between 1902 and 1956 — first, four modernist texts in which banal objects defy and then gratify the protagonist, who ends up ready and almost able to write; and, second, three novels in which the body of the protagonist is indeterminate in its sex, gender, or sexuality. In each of these cases, how do we as readers make texts work for us as ‘an adventure of the body’?

KEYWORDS objects, the body, Proust, Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Sartre, Gide

‘Aussi loin que ma mémoire remonte en arrière’, wrote Gide in a rather different connection, ‘il est là’ (Gide, 1954: 349). I find this is true of realism in its relation to my own research. It is there however far forward I come as well. My next two papers will be on dogs in three authors and two films, in relation to the eloquence of the mute body, and on how we judge Camus’s Meursault and Lionel Shriver’s Eva Katchadourian innocent or guilty in relation to their use of first- and second-person narrative. Both these multiply comparative projects centre on the question of how a sense of material reality is represented in a verbal artefact that makes certain demands on readers to believe or not believe, assent or not assent. This would be my working definition of realism. In this essay I will trace this question through research I have published since 1981: how do fictions, in the first or third person, intrinsically silent and unbodied, make those demands on the bodied reader in the name of dead authors and undead characters?

This is what Sartre wrote in 1947 on the subject of bodies and books:

*l’objet littéraire n’a d’autre substance que la subjectivité du lecteur: l’attente de Raskolnikov, c’est mon attente, que je lui prête; sans cette impatience du lecteur il ne demeurerait que des signes languissants; sa haine contre le juge d’instruction qui l’interroge, c’est ma haine, sollicitée, captée par les signes, et le juge d’instruction lui-même, il n’existerait pas*

sans la haine que je lui porte à travers Raskolnikoff; c'est elle qui l'anime, elle est sa chair. [...] par un renversement qui est le propre de l'objet imaginaire, ce ne sont pas ses conduites qui provoquent mon indignation ou mon estime, mais mon indignation, mon estime qui donnent de la consistance et de l'objectivité à ses conduites. (Sartre, 1948: 95 and 100)

Reading, in this schema, is a 'pacte de générosité entre l'auteur et le lecteur' (Sartre, 1948: 105), based on the 'don de toute sa personne, avec ses passions, ses préventions, ses sympathies, son tempérament sexuel, son échelle de valeurs' (Sartre, 1948: 100). Two bodies, almost certainly absent to each other in time and space but not unaware of each other's crucial virtual existence, collude to produce a third body, the person in the text.

Half a generation later, he describes the books in his grandfather's study:

Je ne savais pas encore lire que, déjà, je les révérais, ces pierres levées: droites ou penchées, serrées comme des briques sur les rayons de la bibliothèque ou noblement espacées en allées de menhirs, je sentais que la prospérité de notre famille en dépendait. [...] mon grand-père — si maladroit, d'habitude, que ma mère lui boutonnait les gants — maniait ces objets culturels avec une dextérité d'officiant. [...] Quelquefois je m'approchais pour observer ces boîtes qui se fendaient comme des huîtres et je découvrais la nudité de leurs organes intérieurs, des feuilles blêmes et moisies, légèrement boursoufflées, couvertes de veinules noires, qui buvaient l'encre et sentaient le champignon. (Sartre, 1964: 37)

Here the body re-enters the text, securely ironized by the sixty-year-old autobiographer (whose lifelong aversion to oysters and mushrooms is well documented), as the affect invested in books by a child whose animism depends on his illiteracy. Because he cannot read, he reads the patriarch's books as the solid stones on which family fortunes depend, the sacred objects of a writer's graceful mastery. Yet when the child approaches them, they break open with a shock, in a primal scene of the discovery of the uncanny — the gate to the mother's inner body.

Both these images are essential for understanding realism. From the point of view of sweet reason, I find Sartre's first representation of the process of reading admirable; but we also need the second representation in order to incorporate what is at stake when we draw near to the body in the library. Affect, fantasy, horror, and seduction attend every act of reading, all the more if we accept that to 'be inside' (or to 'have entered') a thing of language is like being inside (or entering) a body. In 1853 Flaubert contrasted the travail of writing two very different books: '*Saint Antoine* ne m'a pas demandé le quart de la tension d'esprit que la *Bovary* me cause. C'était un déversoir; je n'ai eu que plaisir à écrire, et les dix-huit mois que j'ai passés à en écrire les 500 pages ont été les plus profondément voluptueux de toute ma vie. Juge donc, il faut que j'entre à toute minute dans des *peaux* qui me sont antipathiques' (Flaubert, 1980b: 297). Man and boy, writer and reader, here both treat the text as a woman they hesitate to enter. Any approach to a text is a fantasmatic adventure of the body.

I will look presently at three cases of texts whose authors deliberately cultivate indeterminacy in the bodies of their protagonists, testing their readability to the utmost. But I shall begin with my first substantial piece of research, published in 1981.

In a letter to Louise Colet of 1846, Flaubert wrote: ‘Il y a [...] dans chaque objet banal de merveilleuses histoires. Chaque pavé de la rue a peut-être son sublime’ (Flaubert, 1980a: 307). In the late 1970s, when I completed my PhD thesis and adapted it into *The Banal Object* (1981), I was interested in how objects exist and have effects in prose fiction. I was comparing four texts, two in French and two in German, published in the first half of the twentieth century and which are different in many ways, not least in length — Proust and Hofmannsthal weighing in at very different ends of the scale — but which had in common the semi-autobiographical treatment of a negative apprenticeship in becoming an author.<sup>1</sup> The texts begin with disturbing encounters with objects such as a bookcase, a pencil, or a pebble and end with objects that may seem similar — a watering-can, a tin-lid, or a scratched record — but which reverse the crisis and afford a view of the kind of sublimity Flaubert may have had in mind. The banal objects that frighten Proust’s Marcel, Rilke’s Malte, Hofmannsthal’s Chandos, or Sartre’s Roquentin are not what J. P. Stern calls the ‘emblems of plenty’ which, in texts, are indicative of ‘an unabating *interest* in this world and in this society as a thing real and, as to its reality, wholly unproblematic’ (Stern, 1973: 5, Stern’s italics): they stand out as alien to such an unproblematic equation between the material reality of the world and the virtual reality of a text. They are radically incapable of holding the kind of meaning that makes everyday things ‘die Grenzen der Menschen’ [the borders of people] (Nietzsche, 1971: 49), the tools that make pre-reflective action possible, the extensions of our unconscious will, obliging servants without lives of their own; but they are also not endowed with the kind of meaning things normally have in fiction — omens presaging plot or clues anchoring character or place. Their particular cumbersomeness poses a concrete problem in an abstract space.

This is achieved in part because, as I argued in *The Banal Object*, these texts place a romantic dilemma — the alienated individual trapped in an unfit emotional ecology — inside a realist world of represented things. Realism grew out of romanticism but only in order to close the gap between self and world by accepting the rights of the ‘well-founded reality [that] holds madness up to ridicule’ (Auerbach, 1953: 347). These four texts offer a first-person perspective which is that of neither memoir nor confession; no one pretends to speak to anyone here, as they will in texts I shall discuss later. This is realism, like Miss Lonelyhearts, with its ‘back to the wall’ (see West, 1974: 78). Not only frustrated as people in a place, these narrators are frustrated as writers unable to write.

Of course it all ends happily, though the reader is both witness to and ejected from the moment of solution. Marcel ends poised to start the book we are about to put down, Roquentin to adapt a diary into a novel that might, if he is lucky, cause readers to think of his life as ‘quelque chose de précieux et d’à moitié légendaire’ (Sartre, 1938: 249). But Chandos ends only able to hope that there might somehow be ‘eine Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen, und in welcher ich vielleicht einst im Grabe vor einem unbekanntem Richter mich verantworten werde’ [a language in which mute objects speak to me and in which one day in my grave I may be able to give an account of myself before an unknown judge] (Hofmannsthal, 1955: 115). And, most interesting of all, Malte Laurids Brigge disappears completely from the text he has narrated and the Paris in which he has suffered; the book closes on a retelling of the story of the Prodigal Son in which the latter is the end-point of a

transitive sentence with no object: ‘er war jetzt furchtbar schwer zu lieben, und er fühlte, daß nur Einer dazu imstande sei. Der aber wollte noch nicht’ [he was now terribly difficult to love, and he felt that only One was now capable of that. But He was not yet willing] (Rilke, 1975: 234).

The proof and the impossibility of solving the problem of materiality in fiction coexist, then, in each of these texts. This happens not only with the objects; it also happens with the bodies of the protagonists. The language they use to represent the crises is full of metaphors of penetration and absorption. These include images of eating and reproduction, the body ingesting, digesting, excreting, creating: Marcel, for example, finds a Combray that was once ‘comestible et dévote’ (Proust, 1954, 1: 383) now miraculously ‘sorti de ma tasse de thé’ (Proust, 1954, 1: 48), and one of the things he then recollects is the first prose poem he wrote as a child and which made him feel exactly like ‘une poule [qui venait de] pondre un œuf’ (Proust, 1954, 1: 182).

This language of penetration and absorption may be horrible or gratifying, or even, most strikingly, both together. Thus, if he leaves open the window of his grim Paris room at night, Malte is bombarded with sensations: ‘Elektrische Bahnen rasen läutend durch meine Stube. Automobile gehen über mich hin’ [Electric trams race clamouring through my room. Cars rampage over me] (Rilke, 1975: 8); if Chandos tries to think straight, ‘die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich: sie gerannen zu Augen, die mich anstarrten und in die ich wieder hineinstarren muß: Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindelt, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt’ [individual words swam around me; they congealed into eyes that stared at me, into which I had to stare back: they are whorls that trap you: you get dizzy looking down into them, they spin and spin and you tumble in, falling into endless emptiness] (Hofmannsthal, 1955: 109–10).

But almost identical horrors prove capable of producing a positive result. For instance, after Malte has fled from the exposed wall of a demolished house, realising to his horror that it is ‘zu Hause in mir’ [at home in me] (Rilke, 1975: 47), he reminds us of his grandfather’s house, described twenty pages earlier:

So wie ich es in meiner kindlich gearbeiteten Erinnerung wiederfinde, ist es kein Gebäude: es ist ganz aufgeteilt in mir: da ein Raum, dort ein Raum und hier ein Stück Gang, das diese beide Räume nicht verbindet, sondern für sich, als Fragment, aufbewahrt ist. In dieser Weise ist alles in mir verstreut. [...] Es ist, als wäre das Bild dieses Hauses aus unendlicher Höhe in mich hineingestürzt und auf meinem Grunde zerschlagen. (Rilke, 1975: 26–27)

[I search for it in my memory, reworked by the child I was, and find it is not a building at all but scattered in pieces inside me: here a room, there a room and here a bit of corridor which does not connect these two rooms but seems to be conserved by itself, like a fragment. In this way it is all dispersed inside me. [...] It is as though the image of this house had been flung from an infinite height and shattered into pieces on the floor of me.

Similarly, when in the Bouville public park, Roquentin finds a kind of relief

Elle était là, posée sur le jardin, dégringolée dans les arbres, toute molle, poissant tout, tout épaisse, une confiture. Et j’étais dedans, moi, avec tout le jardin? [...] Je n’étais pas surpris, je savais bien que c’était le Monde, le Monde tout nu qui se montrait tout d’un

coup, et j'étouffais de colère contre ce gros être absurde. [...] Je criai « quelle saleté, quelle saleté! » et je me secouai pour me débarrasser de cette saleté poisseuse, mais elle tenait bon et il y avait tant, des tonnes et des tonnes d'existence, indéfiniment: j'étouffais au fond de cet immense ennui. Et puis, tout d'un coup, le jardin se vida comme par un grand trou, le monde disparut de la même façon qu'il était venu, ou bien je me réveillai — en tout cas je ne le vis plus [...]

Je me levai, je sortis. Arrivé à la grille, je me suis retourné. Alors le jardin m'a souri. (Sartre, 1938: 189–90)

In the first of these last two passages, Malte experiences memory like a sort of archaeological self-surgery, just as Marcel presents the recovery of the madeleine awaiting discovery in that tea-cup as treasure buried at the bottom of an internal sea: 'je sens tressaillir en moi quelque chose qui se déplace, voudrait s'élever, quelque chose qu'on aurait désancré, à une grande profondeur; je ne sais ce que c'est, mais cela monte lentement; j'éprouve la résistance et j'entends la rumeur des distances traversées' (Proust, 1954, 1: 46). Both construe the mind, the personal past, as a body-world to be excavated. In the Sartre passage, the existentially charged present, in a quasi-hallucination, becomes something much more gendered: a bit of exorbitant nature in the city, a piece of femininity in Roquentin's fantasy of himself: rather than explore the 'ignoble marmelade' (Sartre, 1938: 189) that is his inner landscape he lets himself in, and then out, of a mother-space. Emerging out of her, he sees her smile at him.

To summarize the main points of this first adventure in realism — if the problem of materiality in a verbal medium is posed *in extremis* in these four early twentieth-century fictions, it also permits at least a provisional resolution. Objects close against and then open up to the quasi-autobiographical protagonist who, by narrating, can both enter and be entered by a textual world that is both edible and reproducible. How do readers play their essential part in making this happen?

Over the next twenty years, my research focused mainly on the question that is glimpsed in that last citation from Sartre: how does the feminine appear, often between the lines, of male-authored writing? This is another version of textual silencing that relies on a particular kind of reading to release it. I called my 1986 study of *Manon Lescaut* *The Unintended Reader* because I took it that the 'enigma' of such a figure as Manon, perceptible through the confession of the young man who has loved and lost her, can be understood only by a reading against the grain which unearths her from a text that exists to contain her. A few years later, in *Narcissus and Echo*, I performed the same operation on a series of texts that I call the 'confessional *récit*'.<sup>2</sup> All in French, mainly from the early nineteenth century, these were short first-person fictions in which a man tells his tale to an older man from whom he seeks (and sometimes gets) a sort of absolution: the woman, whether loved too much or too little, whether culturally endogamous or exogamous, whether too virtuous or too wild, always dies, as his mother has generally died giving birth to him. What he does now is place his story, like a good Oedipus, in the hands of the father he no longer needs to kill, for the dead mother is here instead. I am still interested in the way that the narrator and the implied (intra- and extra-diegetic) narratees of such first-person fictions use text to inter the female figure while pretending to use it to disinter her.<sup>3</sup>

The relation of such drastic mourning to creativity, reproduction and replacement will be the subject of my next monograph, *Eurydice's Revenge; or, The Haunting of the Replacement Child*.

These analyses would not have been possible without two theoretical assumptions: the feminist assumption that gender is everywhere, significant in both the wish to read and the wish to be read; and the psychoanalytic assumption that everything is an utterance and no utterance is innocent. I looked for the women in the male-authored, male-narrated *récit* and in the major novels that dominate third-person realism later in the nineteenth century. In *The Adulteress's Child* (1992), the main texts were analysed in two groups: those of the 'patrilinear mother', where the beloved is the mother of one or more sons — Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir* (1831), Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869), Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1873) and Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean* (1887) — and those of the 'matrilinear mother', in which she is the mother of a daughter: Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1895), and again *Anna Karenina*. Key topoi in these fictions are the sudden illness of the patrilinear mother's son and the condemnation of the matrilinear mother to a walled space (garden or cell) in which she suffers the incomprehensible fate of 'only' reproducing herself. When she dies, as she always does, of course, the bereaved child ends up fostered by her mother's husband, whether her father or not. Thus the circle of legitimate paternity is closed and, concomitantly, the implied author's position in these 'mature' texts is that of a paternal deity: in Flaubert's terms again, he is like 'Dieu dans l'univers: présent partout et visible nulle part' (Flaubert, 1980: 204).

For such a deity, or for Joyce's similarly distanced author who 'like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails' (Joyce, 1977: 194–95), irony is the technique of first resort. Irony works by seducing the reader into siding with the implied author against the characters. It is particularly active in such techniques as *style indirect libre*, in which the text continues in realism's classic third person and (in French) past historic but we infer the voice of a 'stupid character' as presented without narratorial intervention by the 'clever author'. My view is that it is our wish to side with cleverness over stupidity that makes us construe the 'double voice' at work (see Segal, 1990). Authors less intent on asserting their indifference may use the male protagonist — Julien Sorel, for example, permitted pleasure where, following an identical sick-son test, Frédéric Moreau is not — to act for them as a sort of phallic surrogate, seeking glory or love in their fictional worlds and sometimes getting lucky for the span of a fantasy. But the women remain baffling and mainly mute.

In my two most recent monographs, *André Gide: Pederasty and Pedagogy* (1998) and *Consensuality: Didier Anzieu, Gender and the Sense of Touch* (2009), the question is less of women characters than of the feminine that haunts authorship and other forms of masculine creativity. Femininity may float disturbingly through Gide's project of a pederastic-pedagogic reproduction without the lubrication of body fluids, or it may circulate dazzlingly around Diana's skin or, less explicitly, that of Jude Law in *Gattaca* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*, but it is, characteristically, never in its place.

I want to finish by bringing these two motifs together. How do texts persuade readers to assent to their wives? How, in particular, might they get us to piece out impossible bodies such as one that is neither male nor female, neither masculine nor feminine, neither heterosexual nor homosexual? In 2003 I contributed an essay on this topic to a collection called *Indeterminate Bodies*. Taking Sartre's reading of Raskolnikov as my starting-point, I looked at texts by Rose Macaulay, Proust, and Gide.

What happens when we try to construe Laurie, the first-person protagonist of Rose Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956), who is neither a man nor a woman? When we read: 'He told me that the Imam was saying that I must hold no services in Trabzon, or he would call the police. I said I would hold no services, since I was not, as he could see, a priest' (Macaulay, 1981: 115) or '[there] was Vere standing at the reception desk and giving a note to the reception clerk, and so we met, and then nothing else seemed to matter' (Macaulay, 1981: 148), it may not matter to Laurie but it certainly matters to us. If we cannot 'see' the person who could not be a priest or who is in love with cousin Vere — who we learn posthumously at the very end of the text had a wife — then in an important way we are invited into the fiction only to be refused the wherewithal to live there. How we deal with this is, I believe, dependent on how we deal not only with the sex of a fictional body but with fictional gender (the much-disputed 'female sentence?') or fictional sexuality (we now know Vere was a man but that does not help us know the body that desires him). Of course, this is because Macaulay wants to create texts that are not simply androgynous but indeterminate.

Proust's narrator Marcel is attracted by a 'petite bande' of girls on a beach who all his readers know are based on adolescent boys. Later he is obsessed with his lover Albertine, keeping her virtually incarcerated, having her followed, whenever she goes out, to discover whether she is a lesbian. Gide objected to this gender transposition as having converted '« à l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs » tout ce que ses souvenirs homosexuels lui proposaient de gracieux, de tendre et de charmant, de sorte qu'il ne lui reste plus pour *Sodome* que du grotesque et de l'abject' (Gide, 1996: 1126). But how do we read both Albertine's body and that of jealous Marcel?

If, knowing that Proust never desired women and with the minimal biographical information to pin down the *grand amour* in the figure of his married chauffeur-secretary Alfred Agostinelli, we try to understand the dynamics of this transposition, we find something more complex than Gide and perhaps Proust himself seem to have suspected. When the biographical structure *homosexual man desires bisexual man who desires women* is transposed in fiction into *heterosexual man desires bisexual woman who desires women*, an equivalent logic of frustration is turned into a different logic of identification. If Marcel cannot epistemologically enter into Albertine's desire, and is thus eternally tormented by it, it is because he cannot imagine himself in that scene as her object, just as Proust does not figure as object in Agostinelli's desire for his wife. But the epistemological screw is turned a point further. Proust, a man, has a body like Agostinelli's to desire with, and so shares his subject position. Marcel desires the same sex that Albertine does but not, he declares, in the same way. What fantasy scenario has Proust created as author? Excluded as possible object, he is forced inside as the subject whose soul wants what its body is not and whose soul is what its body cannot want — a version of the inversion theory that he invokes in the case of 'grotesque, abject' Charlus.<sup>4</sup>

The third example comes, despite his disapproval, from the pen of Gide. When he created the character of Gertrude out of his love for Marc Allégret, he was not consciously making the gender-transposition he abhorred in Proust. What he was doing was a more radical transposition of sexuality, dealing in fiction with the breakdown of a principle he had formulated in his early twenties whereby love belonged to his cousin Madeleine, with whom he shared an over-forty-year unconsummated marriage, and desire belonged to a series of young boys, mostly black or working-class. The passion for Marc, which was mainly played out during a 1918 trip to Cambridge, caused a major crisis between André and Madeleine and, in terms of his creative work, formed a break in the writing of two two-part texts, his coming-out memoir *Si le Grain ne meurt* (1924) and the diary  *récit La Symphonie pastorale* (1919). In the latter, an unnamed pastor tells how he rescues, educates, and falls in love with a blind girl whom his family call Gertrude; when she recovers her sight, she realizes it was his son she loved all along (this son has meanwhile decided to become a Catholic priest), and then commits suicide. As in all Gide's  *récits*, the first person is used ironically; the irony is directed at the pastor's spiritual blindness, unadmitted sensuality, confusion between different meanings of the word 'love' and the Protestant religion's susceptibility to such misreadings. But of course, familiarly, by serving up the narrator-lover to the critique of the reader, the irony leaves the author safely out of sight and unimplicated, parthenogenetically paring his fingernails.

Indeed, the plot and characters of *La Symphonie pastorale* endorse this. They, too, live and die by a dream of parthenogenesis. Long before the pastor has 'sinned' by his amorous interest in his pupil he has already used her to imagine creating a child without the mediation of a woman, and a world to keep that child in which there is no taint of flawed material reality. It is when Gertrude becomes able to see the 'real' world that she chooses to die rather than live in its embrace, and at the same moment Jacques enters a monastery in reaction against the impossibility of reifying the idea of fatherhood in his body; through celibacy he will become a 'spiritual father' instead. Each one of these characters is trying to produce an immaterial universe conceived on the model of fiction. They are banned from the everyday world which in Gide is always the 'hateful' universe of family life. As they perish, legitimate authorship lives — by the very same fantasy.

If, then, Macaulay conjures up an experience of androgynous desire by an androgynous protagonist creating an androgynous reading, and Proust forces the reader to follow through the logic of perversely imagining the gender spirals of jealousy, the pleasure of the act of authorship for Gide is represented in a centrifugal gesture by which he makes himself (like Flaubert, though with the opposite concept) into that God-like thing, a subject of no sex, no gender, and above all no desire.

In sum, where does the body of realism reside? The material of a text — objects, characters — is mute without the bodied assent of a reader. In a first-person text the entry-point may be the imagined person of the narrator — situated, like our bodies, in a sex, a gender, or a mode of desire. Or it may be that of the implied author whose fantasy of divine control has caused the fictional world to be and who choreographs the play of ironies from on high. Either way, the 'literary object has no other substance than the subjectivity of the reader' and the latter's pleasure in sharing it around.

## Notes

All translations from German are my own, and reference is to the original text.

<sup>1</sup> The four texts focused on in my thesis (*Banal Objects*) were: Hofmannsthal's 'Ein Brief' (1902), Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27), and Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938).

<sup>2</sup> The main texts covered in this book are Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* (1731; 1753), Mérimée's *Carmen* (1845), Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802), Constant's *Adolphe* (1816), Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835–36), Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836), Nerval's 'Sylvie' (1853) and Fromentin's *Dominique* (1863), and Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (1902) and *La Porte étroite* (1909).

<sup>3</sup> They do this, as I analysed in *The Unintended Reader*, in a curiously similar way to the two men who share a smutty joke at the expense of a woman in Freud's theory of wit; see Freud, 1976: 140–45.

<sup>4</sup> The inversion theory was introduced in the late nineteenth century by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs as an explanation of the newly identified category of homosexual, summed up in the Latin phrase *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa* ('a woman's soul enclosed in a man's body'). When Proust's super-virile Charlus is unaware that he is being watched, his desire for another man makes him appear as 'une femme' (Proust, 1954, II: 604), one of the 'race sur qui pèse une malédiction et qui doit vivre dans le mensonge et le parjure' (Proust, 1954, II: 615).

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