

TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE WORKS OF ANDRÉ GIDE

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 1951, which will be the one-hundredth anniversary of his death, André Gide will perhaps not be hailed as the greatest novelist which France produced in the twentieth century. His important works are few, and have certain flaws which are obvious to most students of literature. However, Gide's contributions to the

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Gide is credited with redefining the novel form, the most notable recent example of which has been *L'Immoraliste* of Gide, and with leading the novel away from realism, blending complexity with clarity. Although Gide himself admitted to having written only one novel during his lifetime, the lengthy *Les faux-monnayeurs*. His fame rests equally on several shorter works which he called *romans*.

Albert Gervais, *André Gide* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 93.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2051, which will be the one-hundredth anniversary of his death, André Gide will perhaps not be hailed as the greatest novelist which France produced in the twentieth century. His important works are few, and have certain flaws which are obvious to most students of literature. However, Gide's contributions to the literary scene have been vastly more extensive than his own relatively few volumes would indicate. His power over the minds of youth horrified members of his own generation; young writers by the hundreds plagued him with pleas for advice. His spiritual influence on our century has undoubtedly been tremendous. As for his literary influence, Albert Guerard, in his book André Gide, summarizes the importance of Gide in contemporary French literature.

André Gide has probably had a wider influence on the twentieth-century French novel than any writer of his time ... He was at the start of the two roads which the contemporary French novel has taken.¹

Gide is credited both with reinvigorating the récit form, the most notable recent example of which has been L'Étranger of Camus, and with leading the novel away from realism, blending complexity with economy. Although Gide himself admitted to having written only one novel during his lifetime, the lengthy Faux-Monnayeurs, his fame rests equally on several shorter works which he called récits.

¹Albert Guerard, André Gide (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 93.

Most American critics are willing to classify all of Gide's longer works as novels. There are, however, certain important distinctions between the two forms. Let us compare the récit and the novel as Gide used the terms.

The récit as conceived by Gide centers about one specific situation or clearly-defined psychological problem. It is narrated in the first person by one of the chief characters, who does not comprehend all of what he reports to the reader. The number of important characters is limited to two, with three or four secondary characters who become incidentally involved in the narrator's exposition. The novel form, on the other hand, is extremely complex, treating many problems and involving numerous characters who interact with one another. No central point of view, no single theme predominate. The novel is a collection of prospective récits, a battleground of narrators eager to confront the reader. Gide seeks to represent the total experience of his life in one complex fabric of interwoven relationships.

Character study is the chief element in all of Gide's important fiction. The récit emphasizes with classical economy the problems of one personality, such as Alissa or Michel. The novel represents the totality of life, people intricately involved with each other. Basically, all the characters in Gide's novel have the same delicately molded complexities as Alissa, although the novel form as Gide uses it does not permit the reader to concentrate on any one person. The basic material out of which both récit and novel are formed is human psychology, independent of literary preoccupations.

In all of Gide's works, he attempts to achieve certain specific aims as he molds and develops his characters. He seeks primarily to liberate his characters from the traditional enslavement to their author which literary practices of the past dictated. He seeks to create personalities capable of independent action. In order to release his characters from his own direct control, Gide withdraws behind an intermediary whose duty it is to introduce the characters to the reader. The point of view from which his novels are presented is never that of the author, but of a fictional observer who reports to the reader. Gide further liberates his characters by refusing to submit them to precise description and conventional psychological analysis. Gide is a behavioristic psychologist; he reports words and actions, but he refuses to assume responsibility for their interpretation. The underlying motives of his characters must be determined by the reader from a close attention to the details of their behavior. Gide remarks on his opposition to the conventional methods of character portrayal, explaining how he creates his own characters:

Le mauvais romancier construit ses personnages; il les dirige et les fait parler. Le vrai romancier les écoute et les regarde agir; il les entend parler dès avant de les connaître, et c'est d'après ce qu'il leur entend dire qu'il comprend peu à peu qui ils sont. (JFM, XIII, 54)²

Gide claims to listen to his characters, to watch them act. His imagination does not extend, however, to the details of their every-

² All quotations from Gide in my text refer to the Nouvelle Revue Française edition, Oeuvres Complètes d'André Gide, 15 vols., Paris, 1933-1939. References to the Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs will be cited hereafter as JFM.

day life. He says, rather humorously:

L'ennui ... c'est d'avoir à conditionner ses personnages Je sais comment ils pensent, comment ils parlent; je distingue la plus subtile intonation de leur voix; je sais qu'il y a de tels actes qu'ils doivent commettre, tels autres qui leur sont interdits... mais, dès qu'il faut les vêtir, fixer leur rang dans l'échelle sociale, leur carrière, le chiffre de leurs revenus; dès surtout qu'il faut les avoisiner, leur inventer des parents, une famille, des amis, je plie boutique. Je vois chacun de mes héros ... orphelin, fils unique, célibataire, et sans enfants. (JFM, XIII, 36)

Gide's refusal to describe the minute details of everyday existence is by admission a concession to his own lack of imagination for concrete details.

If Gide limits himself to the description of behavior, the interpretation of it must be supplied by another source. The reader of Gide's works is entrusted with this task; he must invent an explanation based on the information which Gide supplies. Otherwise the work is destined to remain completely mystifying, as many casual readers of Gide will testify. Gide states often, "Je n'écris que pour être relu." (JFM, XIII, 28) Each of his works seems to be constructed in order to demand a second and even a third reading. A part of each book is deliberately left unwritten. It is the reader who must furnish details, make transitions between scenes, and accumulate evidence in his own memory until a comprehensible picture is formed. Gide dismisses the inattentive reader with a sentence:

Tant pis pour le lecteur paresseux: j'en veux d'autres.
Inquiéter, tel est mon rôle. (JFM, XIII, 61)

The reader's complicity provides a new source of characterization for the author who knows how to enlist it. The complexity of the reader himself is a variable element upon which his ultimate analysis

of Gide's characters will depend.

A word may be said about the relationship of Gide's characters to his own personality. Gide is often accused of writing only about himself. He counters this charge in his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs by quoting Thibaudet:

Le romancier authentique crée ses personnages avec les directions infinies de sa vie possible; le romancier factice les crée avec la ligne unique de sa vie réelle. Le génie du roman fait vivre le possible; il ne fait pas revivre le réel.
(XIII, 62)

Each of Gide's characters is a possibility of his own personality, a conscious attempt to represent what he might have become had all other possibilities been suppressed. He does not reproduce himself; he utilizes his possibilities to create characters who are psychologically true.

I propose to examine the techniques of character presentation which Gide utilizes in three representative works, La Porte étroite, L'Immoraliste, and Les Faux-Monnayeurs. I have chosen these three works because they offer a maximum of interesting techniques with a minimum of repetition. Two other widely read longer works of Gide, Les Caves du Vatican and La Symphonie pastorale, utilize the same techniques which I shall discuss in connection with other works. My purpose will be first to list and discuss the various techniques which I have found in three representative works, and then briefly to evaluate the extent to which Gide's methods succeed in fulfilling their purpose: to liberate his characters from the control of their author. Relatively few critical works refer specifically to Gide's techniques of character presentation; therefore, I have depended

almost entirely on my own reading and analysis of the works themselves. I have been aided in a few cases by Gide's own critical comments on his methods; his Journal, his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs, and his essay, Dostoïevsky, were particularly helpful. Since my paper is a study of the techniques of character presentation, I have included no biographical material and few references to Gide's position in the whole of French literature. I hope to prove by numerous examples the great variety and originality of Gide's methods, and to indicate to some extent the motives which guide his choice.

CHAPTER I

LA PORTE ÉTROITE

La Porte étroite is a récit in which a young man, Jérôme, relates the story of his love for his cousin Alissa and the subsequent failure of their engagement. Jérôme is an obtuse narrator; he has comprehended very little of what he relates. Yet through his unseeing eyes the reader must gain all the information necessary to understand the story. The reader is obliged to overlook Jérôme's attitude, which is one of simple bewilderment, and to penetrate for himself the deeper significance of the events related. Although Jérôme's reporting is quite accurate by itself, his interpretation of events is inadequate for a full understanding of the motivation of the other characters, or even of Jérôme himself. In the second half of the récit, therefore, the reader is aided by new devices incorporated into the narration, the inclusion of Alissa's letters and journal, which offer additional information about Alissa's behavior. These devices free Alissa from Jérôme's mistaken judgments and allow her to speak directly to the reader. The depths of her character become apparent to the reader only when she speaks in the uniquely personal style of her letters and journal. We shall attempt to see what methods of characterization are utilized by the narrator, and to what extent these methods must be supplemented by Alissa's own words.

The character for whose presentation Jérôme is most responsible is himself. Certain of his attitudes are revealed through direct statement, a method which is scrupulously avoided in connection with other characters. A long traditional character sketch near the beginning of the novel states Jérôme's Puritanical traits. He reveals his attitude toward Alissa in a direct statement of his adoration, or pious devotion, an attitude singularly free of desire.

... 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. (V, 95)

The facts which Jérôme states about himself are perfectly sincere insofar as his powers of judgment and self-analysis allow him to be sincere. He reveals his adolescent passions without apparent hesitation, withholding little of which he is himself conscious. Generally, Jérôme's behavior holds few mysteries for the reader, for his position as narrator allows him to explain himself directly.

Jérôme scrupulously avoids direct interpretation of other characters in the first half of the récit, presumably because he realizes that he often fails to comprehend what he reports. His ignorance is usually revealed in a simple, direct admission:

Ah! triste aveugle que j'étais, cherchant mes torts en tâtonnant, de n'avoir pas songé un instant que les paroles de Juliette, que j'avais si mal écoutées et dont je me souvenais si mal, Alissa les avait peut-être mieux entendues. (V, 114)

Generally such a remark is substituted for any more positive interpretation of either events or characters. The task of interpretation is shifted to the reader, who is challenged to understand more than

the narrator. In the second half of the récit, the part to be reinterpreted by Alissa's journal, Jérôme is more willing to describe his own feelings about other characters. He actually misleads the reader on one occasion. Deceived by Alissa's attempt to destroy his love, he indulges in a long and bitter denunciation of his own gullibility. It must be remembered, however, that before presenting the scene in the récit, he warns the reader of coming deception, speaking as the author of the récit and dropping for a moment the role of actor. A long lament introduces the scene of Alissa's deception.

... je ne trouve aujourd'hui nul pardon en moi pour moi-même de n'avoir su sentir, sous le revêtement de la plus factice apparence, palpiter encore l'amour ... (V, 189)

Gide builds up the reader's interest by allowing Jérôme to deceive the reader in the second half of the récit, for at the end all will be revealed by Alissa's journal. Jérôme's deceptions are nevertheless prefaced with discreet warnings from the vantage point of the omniscient writer.

The narrator can record only what he sees and hears. Even physical description is forbidden by the time interval of ten years which separates the action from Jérôme's writing. The only character Jérôme attempts consciously and deliberately to describe to the reader is Lucile Bucolin. A picture, to which he refers as he writes, furnishes the necessary image, for he admits his inability to remember physical features. The detailed physical description of Lucile is the only one of its kind in the récit. When, shortly afterward, Jérôme attempts to describe Alissa, he succeeds only in representing the

haunting, ever-questioning expression of her face, an expression which he associates with that of Beatrice, Dante's spiritual love. The lengthy, precise description of Lucile and the short, rather ethereal presentation of Alissa are not merely accidental. The reader immediately recognizes Lucile as a physical presence; she is the incarnation of physical love, of seduction and desire, the one character who appears to Jérôme shockingly physical in nature. Alissa, on the other hand, is presented to the reader as a spiritualized character, devoid of the physical immediacy of Lucile. These initial impressions are supported by other evidence, but the simple introductory device of physical description quite adequately defines these characters for the reader.

Action without the support of dialogue or direct interpretation is rarely used in the récit to reveal character. There is, indeed, very little action of any kind in Jérôme's récit. However, occasional scenes do inform the reader of character traits by means of action alone. Notable among these is the scene between Lucile and Jérôme in which she adjusts his collar and then proceeds to tickle him. Lucile's actions reveal her sensual nature without the aid of commentary. Jérôme's actions, which are also reported without further interpretation, reveal an abhorrence of his aunt's touch. He rushes away from her, his shirt torn in his hasty retreat.

... je courus jusqu'au fond du jardin ... je trempai mon mouchoir, l'appliquai sur mon front, lavai, frottai mes joues, mon cou, tout ce que cette femme avait touché.
(V, 83)

Jérôme does not interpret his own behavior for the reader; his disgust can be seen from his action. The reader is left to wonder,

however, if the reported actions do not reveal some deeper attitude of which even Jérôme is not aware.

A few gestures reported about Aunt Plantier furnish a simple but quite complete revelation of her character. Jérôme tells the reader:

Un affairément continu l'essoufflait; ses gestes étaient sans douceur, sa voix était sans mélodie; elle nous bousculait de caresses, prise, à n'importe quel moment du jour, d'un besoin d'effusion où son affection pour nous débordait. (V, 103)

Aunt Plantier's later role in the récit substantiates the picture which her actions give of her. It may be noted that Jérôme as narrator conscientiously attempts to present the other characters objectively. A simple description of their actions, completely divorced from his personal opinion, is very often the only evidence which Jérôme offers the reader.

On several occasions some reported action, while very insignificant in itself, furnishes the only clue to the significance of a dialogue. An early dialogue in which Jérôme and Juliette discuss their future lives is particularly unenlightening. Only the subsequent action warns the reader that the dialogue between them contains some hidden significance. When Alissa overhears the conversation, she turns pale, excuses herself hastily, and is followed by Juliette, aghast that Alissa has overheard. The reactions reported by the narrator awaken the reader's curiosity, warning him to reread the passage, lest he overlook certain psychological implications contained in the dialogue. The uncomprehending narrator thus manages to convey to the reader more than he himself actually comprehends.

Jérôme relies heavily on dialogue to present his story. The technique is well chosen, for Jérôme's own bewilderment might otherwise hinder the reader from full comprehension. The primary use of dialogues is to reveal to the reader certain attitudes or nuances of personality which Jérôme has not observed or has neglected to mention. Jérôme tells the reader almost nothing about Alissa. Her personality defines itself through the words that she speaks. Several dialogues reveal the barrier which Alissa's religious convictions offer to Jérôme's hopes. The same scene is repeated again and again; she gently but firmly refuses his love with words such as: "C'est tout seul que chacun de nous doit gagner Dieu." (V, 99) She counters each of his declarations with the same stubborn resistance to earthly happiness. The reader who listens carefully as Alissa speaks has few doubts concerning the outcome of the story, for every dialogue between Alissa and Jérôme records a direct or indirect refusal of love.

Dialogues are very ingeniously used to present the story of Juliette's infatuation with Jérôme. Both the true situation and its misinterpretation are revealed by dialogues. The reader is not prevented from understanding the situation, for Juliette's words hardly veil her feelings. Many scattered remarks make clear her growing love for Jérôme and her fear of hurting her sister. She breaks off a conversation by telling Jérôme sharply:

A présent laisse-moi. Ce n'est pas pour causer avec moi que tu es venu. Nous sommes depuis bien trop longtemps ensemble. (V, 122)

The reader must be careful to observe and remember the many small

indications of Juliette's feelings which are present in her speeches.

Of greater interest are the dialogues introduced to confuse the reader, or at least to support Jérôme's blindness. Two new characters appear to further Jérôme's misunderstanding of the triangular affair. The first is Jérôme's Aunt Plantier, who in many dialogues questions Jérôme on the progress of his love affair and assures him of Alissa's love. In one of her most ironic speeches Aunt Plantier reports to Jérôme that Alissa hesitates to become engaged only because she does not wish to marry before her sister. Neither Jérôme nor his aunt realizes that Alissa waits for her sister to marry Jérôme! A second character, Abel Vautier, presents a mistaken view of Juliette in much the same way that Aunt Plantier misinterprets Alissa. Abel is, as it were, a secondary obtuse narrator, an uncomprehending commentator who reports Juliette's reactions to Jérôme. Abel is passionately in love with Juliette and quite convinced that she returns his love. The reader may be warned by Abel's declaration to Jérôme that he is ready to propose marriage:

--Mon cher, je peux déjà t'annoncer que la conversation que j'ai eue ce matin avec Juliette a été presque décisive, bien que nous n'ayons presque parlé que de toi. (V, 136)

More likely the reader will succumb to Abel's overpowering enthusiasm and self-confidence. The dialogues between Jérôme and Abel very convincingly divert the reader's attention from the true attitudes of both Juliette and Alissa.

A technique which very effectively liberates the characters from the bonds of the récit is the omission of several very important dialogues. Abel reports that he has spoken to Juliette, that she

responds to his love. Juliette's words, however, do not appear; Abel merely interprets them for Jérôme. Similarly, Abel reports on one occasion that a heated discussion has taken place between Alissa and Juliette, a discussion at which he has not been present. These dialogues are of tremendous significance, but are unavailable to the reader and to Jérôme because the verisimilitude of the narrator must be preserved. Even a secondary narrator may not report what he has not himself experienced. By means of dialogues which are indicated but not quoted, certain characters are given added freedom of action. They are snatched from the control of the narrator, and are allowed an existence independent of the récit. Jérôme merely reports what he is able to see, or what is reported to him. When his resources fail, the task of reconstructing unrevealed dialogues falls to the reader's imagination. A new element of characterization becomes significant: the creative imagination of the individual reader.

The device of the obtuse narrator is quite interesting technically as a method of character presentation. However, serious revelation of character is hampered somewhat by a device which renders all but external evidence inadmissible. The realms of the mind and spirit, so important in a character such as Alissa, are not readily available to a narrator like Jérôme. A new device is inevitable, and Jérôme chooses to introduce the letters of Alissa as a revelation of her personality.

In her letters Alissa takes on a new and complex existence for the reader. She steps down from the pedestal on which Jérôme has placed her to assume an active role in the récit. Her actions have

been able to reveal only her mysterious withdrawal from Jérôme's love. Her letters reveal the many oppositions which exist within her: natural joy versus Puritan austerity, earthly happiness versus heavenly perfection, sensuality versus spirituality. She has not one motive for her behavior, but many. The basic themes of her personality are revealed for the first time to the reader.

Alissa's letters, addressed to Jérôme, present first the conflict in her attitude toward him. The sisterly tone which she assumes in her first letter places Jérôme at a distance. Her withdrawal is not consistent, however. A new element of desire for Jérôme becomes evident as the time of their reunion approaches. Alissa says:

... tout à coup je t'ai souhaité là, senti là, près de moi, avec une violence telle que tu l'auras peut-être senti. (V, 157)

Alissa feels a spiritual union with Jérôme, as when she follows his travels, and the words above seem to indicate that she is not unresponsive to physical desire. Yet when he wishes to visit her, she dissuades him. Her flight from love is not analyzed by her letters, but it is clearly revealed by her contrasting desires. A great conflict is evident from her behavior, the cause of which will be indicated by a later device.

The emotional intensity of Alissa's letters is not often interrupted by commentary from Jérôme. For one entire chapter, the central one of the récit, he is content to assume an editorial function, imposing no limitations on Alissa's freedom to express herself. After the short internal monologue of the central chapter, two other letters from Alissa are incorporated into Jérôme's récit.

These letters assume a somewhat different function, revealing Alissa's attitude to a given situation, her reunion with Jérôme. Her point of view is essential to the understanding of later events. Once more the narrator attempts to be fair to the reader; total comprehension of all Alissa's reactions is rendered possible, if not probable, but the inclusion of her letters. Alissa has analyzed herself and her love, and she attempts to impart her analysis to Jérôme. Her perception of their relationship is amazingly accurate, especially when she characterizes Jérôme's love for her as "un amour de tête, un bel entêtement intellectuel de tendresse et de fidélité." (V, 177) In the second letter she attempts to explain the reasons which compel her to enforce a separation. Her reason falters, but some indication of her position is offered to the reader. The final ominous words, "Hic incipit amor dei" (V, 187), announce an irrevocable decision. These two letters are Alissa's only attempts to explain herself to Jérôme. The closing events of the récit will remain incomprehensible to him until he reads Alissa's journal.

A final revelatory device is necessary to clarify Alissa's behavior for the reader. Her journal, presented separately as the last chapter in Jérôme's récit, is a day-by-day record of Alissa's thoughts. Beginning soon after Juliette's marriage, Alissa records the progression of her attitudes, her internal debates and self-examinations, as she struggles to resolve the conflicts within herself. The journal is a masterpiece of rationalized self-analysis; Alissa records her motives exactly as she understands them. Step by

step she attempts to justify to herself and to the reader the internal drama of her life.

The effectiveness of this ultimate revelation of Alissa's motives becomes apparent when a passage of her journal is compared with the same moment in her life as described for Jérôme in one of her letters. Her letter acknowledges the emotions which disturb her:

... pourquoi mon coeur cède-t-il à une mélancolie
incompréhensible, dont je ne parviens pas à me défendre?
La beauté même de ce pays ... ajoute encore à ma
tristesse C'est quelque chose comme de l'humiliation
que j'éprouve. (V, 165-66)

No explanation is given; a simple statement of her feelings is offered with some apparent bewilderment. In her journal, however, Alissa analyzes her state of mind carefully, attempting to penetrate the depths of her sadness.

Pourquoi me mentirais-je à moi-même? ... Ce bonheur [de Juliette] que j'ai tant souhaité, jusqu'à offrir de lui sacrifier mon bonheur, je souffre de le voir obtenu sans peine je discerne bien qu'un affreux retour d'égoïsme s'offense de ce qu'elle ait trouvé son bonheur ailleurs que dans mon sacrifice ... Je suis comme humiliée que Dieu ne l'exige plus de moi. (V, 217-18)

Alissa's careful self-analysis explains much to the reader. She traces the reasons for her behavior on each of the occasions which Jerome records in the last half of his récit, thus clarifying his presentation with an account of her own attitudes. From the hesitations and mistakes of Jérôme's very external presentation the reader has been allowed to penetrate inward, until the scene of the action becomes Alissa's mind.

It would appear that Alissa's journal is the ultimate revelation which a character can make concerning himself. But the reader must

remember that Alissa does not know herself thoroughly. The conflicts which she reveals in her letters remain unresolved, and her true motives are hidden under a mass of carefully constructed rationalizations. The theme of Alissa's journal becomes a drama between selves: which of her many selves will she indulge, which ones will she attempt to sublimate forever? Many facets of her personality are unrecognized or immediately repudiated by her conscious mind. The question of her mother's influence appears veiled in half-spoken language. After having been reminded of her resemblance to her mother, Alissa immediately recalls the events of the evening. She was so overwhelmed by Jérôme's presence that she was obliged to leave the room in haste. She says in her journal:

J'ai très mal dormi cette nuit, inquiète, oppressée,
misérable, obsédée par le souvenir du passé qui remontait
en moi comme un remords. Seigneur, enseignez-moi
l'horreur de tout ce qui a quelque apparence du mal.
(V, 223)

Alissa reveals what she is able to conclude about herself, but total revelation would be foreign to her nature. Once more the reader is confronted with a narrator who, although she is by far the most perceptive narrator in the book, nevertheless proceeds haltingly, with the final admission that self-deception is her lot.

Les raisons qui me font le fuir? Je n'y crois plus ...
Et je le fuis pourtant, avec tristesse, et sans
comprendre pourquoi je le fuis. (V, 225)

If the reader had to rely solely on Jérôme's narration, Alissa would be only the fictional prototype of a pious young Puritan. Her journal, however, endows her with life, revealing a representative of troubled humanity.

The devices of character presentation which Gide utilizes in this récit have but one purpose: to allow his characters to exist, not as creatures of their author, molded by him and then constantly manipulated, but as independent beings. Alissa's letters and journals are perhaps Gide's most successful attempts at such a liberation, for Alissa speaks to the reader from the hopelessness of her solitude. Although her character is introduced by Jérôme, she herself outlines her contradictory motives for the reader. Gide succeeds in becoming Alissa more surely than he succeeds with any other character.

The use of the narrator places between the characters and the reader an intermediary other than the author. Lest Jérôme's personality dominate the récit even more than the author's would have done, Jérôme is made weak and hesitant, the most conscientiously objective narrator in any of Gide's works. Other characters appear before the reader almost completely unaltered by Jérôme's presentation. His purpose is merely to observe and record; the predominance of dialogues reminds the reader of the narrator's scrupulous refusal to interpret. The récit is very much like a play in which each character comes to the center of the stage to reveal himself to the audience, then to withdraw once more into the wings. The narrator and the reader are the audience; they are allowed only to listen and to observe. The scenes which Jérôme mentions but is unable to report, especially certain dialogues between Juliette and Alissa, seem to liberate the characters from their literary framework, reminding the reader that their lives have been only partially revealed. Some aspects will remain forever hidden from view.

Gide's ultimate attitude is similar to that of Jérôme: he observes and records, but admits candidly that he is unable to interpret. No creator should claim the attribute of omniscience, for he has in reality only set his characters in motion. A final authority will judge his work, the comprehending reader, who will add to Gide's devices of characterization the element of his own experience.

The death of his wife. *Le Symphoniste* differs from *Le Fugitif* in that the reader is dependent on the narrator for all character revelation. No additional devices are added to refine or correct the interpretation. The *général* characterizes one character, Michel himself, and one period of crisis in his life. These characterizations are introduced only as they are necessary to reveal Michel to the reader. *Le Symphoniste* is an *à la fois* narrative; he is surprised by the course of his life, unable to comprehend the motives behind his behavior. His *général* is an attempt to order and clarify for himself the events of his life. The reader must be his judge, just as the friends whom he summons are requested to judge him. Michel is unable to penetrate his own complex being; he must leave it. The reader is asked to listen to Michel's statement, weigh the facts against what Michel says is self-justification, and reach a conclusion which has eluded Michel himself.

For purposes of exposition Michel's *général* is enclosed in a framework. The book opens with a letter from one of Michel's friends to a brother in government service, stating that Michel is giving a position. The introductory letter furnishes a pretext for the *général* which follows; Michel has summoned his friends to hear his tale and

CHAPTER II

L'IMMORALISTE

L'Immoraliste is a récit, narrated by Michel, the chief character, who relates the story of his life from the time of his marriage until the death of his wife. L'Immoraliste differs from La Porte étroite in that the reader is dependent on the narrator for all character revelation. No additional devices are added to refute or correct his interpretation. The récit concerns one character, Michel himself, and one period of crisis in his life. Other characters are introduced only as they are necessary to reveal Michel to the reader. Michel, like Jérôme in La Porte étroite, is an obtuse narrator; he is horrified by the course of his life, unable to comprehend the hidden fatality behind his behavior. His récit is an attempt to order and clarify for himself the events of his life. The reader must be his judge, just as the friends whom he summons are requested to judge him. Michel is unable to penetrate his own complex being; he must have aid. The reader is asked to listen to Michel's statement, weigh the facts against what Michel says in self-justification, and reach a conclusion which has eluded Michel himself.

For purposes of verisimilitude Michel's récit is enclosed in a framework. The book opens with a letter from one of Michel's friends to a brother in government service, asking that Michel be given a position. The introductory letter furnishes a pretext for the récit which follows: Michel has summoned his friends to hear his tale and

advise him as to the future. The reader is identified with Michel's friends; he too will be one of Michel's judges. The introductory letter offers a brief commentary on Michel's behavior, warning the reader of what he may expect, but more important, it poses the question of the future. Given Michel's former life, what should be his future? This problem, the pretext of the letter, is emphasized by Michel's own awareness of his dilemma. He tells his friends:

Je ne comprends plus. J'ai besoin... J'ai besoin de parler, vous dis-je. Savoir se libérer n'est rien; l'ardu, c'est savoir être libre. (IV, 15)

His life is thus extended beyond the limits of the récit into an unpredictable future. The letter and Michel's pretext for telling his tale may seem somewhat artificial, but they indicate in a precise manner what is expected of the reader.

The chief device of character presentation in the récit is direct statement by the narrator. His tale is an attempt to order, to justify his behavior by a careful analysis of each step in the evolution of his immoralism. Retrospective self-analysis characterizes the tone of the récit. Michel outlines the development of his present point of view, beginning with a necessary résumé of his early life, and proceeding to a statement of the new moral principles which he accepts after his illness. The ethical principle which had determined his behavior during his illness is clearly summarized.

... mon devoir, c'était ma santé; il fallait juger bon, nommer Bien, tout ce qui m'était salubre, oublier, repousser tout ce qui ne guérissait pas. (IV, 34)

After his illness he decides:

Ce fut dès lors celui que je prétendis découvrir: l'être authentique, le "vieil homme", celui dont ne voulait plus l'évangile Mon seul effort était donc de systématiquement honnir ou supprimer tout ce que je croyais ne devoir qu'à mon instruction passée et à ma première morale. (IV, 55-56)

Michel is a trained scholar; he must present his behavior in systematic fashion. The reader is not allowed to forget that the récit is a conscious attempt at self-justification presented by a skilled reasoner. This inherent logic and directness of approach furnish many pitfalls for the unsuspecting reader.

Michel reconstructs the origins of his ethical system step by step, but he does not emphasize every aspect of his new behavior for the reader. Some of his most typical and most significant reactions are merely stated in passing. Their importance becomes clear to the reader only through constant repetition of the same trait. A recurring theme in Michel's behavior is his aversion to all forms of ugliness. He is irritated by the squalor of his hotel room; he is annoyed when Marceline brings sickly Arab boys to their home. This reaction is extended later to his belongings. He complains bitterly when his friends carelessly spot the carpets and chairs in his Paris apartment.

Meubles, étoffes, estampes, à la première tache perdaient pour moi toute valeur; choses tachées, choses atteintes de maladie et comme désignées par la mort. (IV, 105)

Marceline's illness takes on terrifying significance when Michel states:

La maladie était entrée en Marceline, l'habitait désormais, la marquait, la tachait. C'était une chose abîmée. (IV, 119)

Many aspects of Michel's growing sensuality are stated for the reader, but are not emphasized by thorough analysis. Repetition is often utilized to inform the reader of Michel's characteristic attitudes. The reader's memory must serve to emphasize those aspects of his behavior upon which Michel does not comment.

On several occasions Michel unintentionally misleads the reader with a rationalization of his motives. One such instance is the appearance of a young Arab boy, Bachir, whom Marceline brings home to entertain Michel. Michel is fascinated by the boy, and for the first time begins to take an interest in his surroundings. He feels compelled to touch Bachir's bare shoulder. The next day Michel eagerly awaits the boy's arrival, and is bitterly disappointed when Bachir does not come. After some apparent hesitation, Michel explains these reactions:

C'était là ce dont je m'éprenais en lui: la santé. La santé de ce petit corps était belle. (IV, 31)

Many incidents concerning Michel's fascination with adolescent boys are recorded, allowing the reader to become more and more certain of Michel's latent homosexuality. On one occasion Michel admits his preoccupation, but seems to be unconscious of the significance of his attitude. He leaves the reader to draw conclusions for himself.

L'air était calme et tiède, mais je pris mon châle pourtant, comme prétexte à lier connaissance avec celui qui me le porterait. (IV, 42)

Another attitude which he constantly excuses by rationalization is his indifference to Marceline. He reasons:

Je mis sur le compte de ma faiblesse mon humeur fuyante et bizarre, affirmai que jusqu'à présent j'avais été trop las pour aimer, mais que je sentirais désormais croître avec ma santé mon amour. (IV, 51)

Michel does not explain his past behavior with the aid of his present knowledge. At the moment of telling, he is aware that his behavior was hypocritical, but he informs the reader only of his past attitudes and suspicions about himself, his past reactions to the situations he describes. For this reason the reader may often be misled by Michel's narrative. The Michel of the present is presumably fairly well aware of his self-deception, but the Michel whose reactions appear in the récit remains blind to his own folly.

Michel's direct statements are not the only means by which he reveals himself to the reader. In many cases he reports actions by which he may be interpreted. If his words represent several levels of awareness, from conscious rationality to unconscious rationalization, his actions are a constant factor which remain valid whether they belie or support his explanations. When separated from his words, Michel's actions are the most accurate representations of his true motives. The reader is free to judge his deeds, such as his reactions to the various adolescent boys, his physical exertions on the farm, and his nightly poaching ventures. Michel's actions reveal more than he realizes. His fight with the drunken coachman, explained as a desire to protect Marceline from danger, reveals to the reader the tremendous inner forces which motivate Michel, forces which are under only temporary control. Michel's behavior is never completely justified by the given explanation.

His ethical system, carefully presented at the beginning of the récit, soon fails to provide an explanation for his actions, until at the end of his récit he is guided by instinct, all reason having deserted him. The controlling demon drops all pretense and reveals itself as a blind force in Michel's personality. Michel's actions are the gauge by which the reader must accept or discount Michel's explanations.

Michel's descriptions of the various settings in which he finds himself reveal his growing awareness of his senses. The settings have a direct influence on Michel's ethic, for his reactions are quite different in Biskra and in Normandy. In Biskra all his senses are alive and uncontrolled. He describes his reaction to the public garden, mentioning the cool shade, the "odeur légère qui semblait entrer en moi par plusieurs sens" (IV, 42), the sounds about him. A strange bush compels his attention.

... l'écorce, de loin, me parut de consistance si bizarre que je dus me lever pour aller la palper. Je la touchai comme on caresse; j'y trouvais un ravissement. (IV, 43)

His uncontrolled sensuality in Biskra, however, may be contrasted with his attitude in Normandy, where the peaceful setting calms him. He is impressed with the harmony between man and nature signified by well-cultivated fields and orchards. He formulates a new ethic.

Je me construais une éthique qui devenait une science de la parfaite utilisation de soi par une intelligente contrainte. (IV, 76)

The settings of the récit influence the development of Michel's character, they help to reveal his sensuality, and in an objective way, they mirror his personality at a given time, symbolizing either

anarchy or restraint. The settings are an additional aid to the reader in understanding Michel's complexities.

In addition to the information which Michel furnishes about himself, the reader is aided in understanding Michel by the reactions of secondary characters to Michel's behavior. Michel attaches little real importance to the other characters in his récit, concentrating heavily on his own activities. His neglect of his wife Marceline is particularly apparent to the reader. Marceline is nothing more than a statistic in Michel's life. Having described her constant attentions to him during his illness, he almost ignores her presence thereafter, except to reproach himself occasionally for his own indifference. He reports fragmentary dialogues, few actions which might reveal her to the reader. He claims to love her, but his most frequent reaction to her is one of irritation, first when she does not provide the food he needs, then when she accompanies him on visits to the garden, and later when she is weakened by illness. He quickly tries to repress these feelings, but they nevertheless reveal his attitude. Marceline belongs with his old ethic; his new one makes no allowance for her.

Michel's delight with the numerous adolescents in the récit contrasts with his indifference to Marceline. His reaction to one adolescent furnishes him with a particularly enlightening indication of his new moral values. One day he watches Mektir steal a pair of scissors from Marceline's sewing basket. Michel makes no attempt to prevent the theft; instead, he claims Mektir as his favorite from that day on. He analyzes his reactions:

Mon coeur battit avec force un instant, mais les plus sages raisonnements ne purent faire aboutir en moi le moindre sentiment de révolte. Bien plus! ... Quand j'eus laissé à Moktir tout le temps de me bien voler, je me tournai de nouveau vers lui et lui parlai comme si rien ne s'était passé. (IV, 49)

Michel's reaction to Moktir's theft is an indication to Michel and to the reader of the progress of Michel's new ethic.

Ménalque is another character whose chief purpose is to reveal Michel to himself and to the reader. Ménalque is a contrivance of the author; he is a prototype of the complete immoralist, introduced as a standard by which Michel's efforts toward immoralism may be judged. Ménalque is presented through several dialogues in which he and Michel discuss their views of life. Ménalque is a critic of Michel's behavior, a judge who accurately evaluates the extent to which Michel has failed to be consistent. Ménalque tells him:

... pour quelqu'un qui n'a pas le sens de la propriété, vous semblez posséder beaucoup; c'est grave. (IV, 103)

Michel refutes this charge in characteristic fashion, but is troubled by Ménalque's words. Ménalque offers the following advice:

Des mille formes de la vie chacun ne peut connaître qu'une. Envier le bonheur d'autrui, c'est folie ... Gardez le bonheur calme du foyer... (IV, 113)

Ménalque is a true immoraliste who has completely liberated himself, whereas Michel is only partially free. The falseness of Michel's position is judged for the reader by Ménalque. Michel acknowledges his discomfiture upon hearing Ménalque's reflections:

... beaucoup pourtant se gravèrent en moi, d'autant plus fortement que j'eusse désiré les oublier plus vite; non qu'elles m'apprirent rien de bien neuf--mais elles mettaient à nu brusquement ma pensée; une pensée que je couvrais de tant de voiles, que j'avais presque pu l'espérer étouffée. (IV, 115)

If Michel is partially enlightened by Ménalque's remarks, he nevertheless persists in his course, refusing to make a lucid choice between the possibilities within himself. The dialogues with Ménalque in the central chapter of the récit indicate a summit in Michel's rationalization. He can pursue his stated ethic no further. He must follow the example of Ménalque's immoralism or acknowledge his responsibilities to his property. His refusal to choose is equally a choice. Ménalque's appearance indicates how far Michel has progressed, but also how far he must still go in his liberation.

Michel reveals himself in his own words, giving the reader the impression that he is not restrained by the hand of an omniscient author. He may conceal what he wishes from the reader, he may falsify his actions with carefully constructed rationalizations, he may refuse to interpret for the reader if he wishes. He himself is responsible for the impression which the reader receives. Lest that impression be false, the opinions of other observers of his behavior, his wife and Ménalque particularly, are introduced to aid the reader. It is not Gide who has indicted Michel at the end of the récit, but Michel himself. The récit is deceptively simple in construction, but through very simple techniques it manages to reveal Michel's self-deception, of which he is only partially aware.

L'Immoraliste presents a problem which La Porte étroite does not pose; Michel is a much more personal narrator than is Jérôme in the latter récit. Because Michel's personality completely dominates the récit, and because the facts of Michel's liberation reproduce those of Gide's own liberation in North Africa, the reader is likely

to identify Michel with Gide. These elements of the récit make the separation of character and author very difficult to achieve. Gide nevertheless desires to maintain a distance from his character. The recounting of Michel's growing awareness, told in retrospect, yet with a conscious attempt not to explain past behavior with present knowledge, challenges the reader to discover the hidden elements in Michel's tale. The question of Michel's future, to be decided with the aid of his friends, separates him from an omniscient author, instead leaving him to the judgment of the reader. Michel is unable to comprehend and to judge the totality of his behavior. He has formulated a self-justifying ethic, he has attempted to explain the motives which impelled him, but he is mystified by the disastrous sum of his actions. The reader is left to weigh and conclude, supplying for himself the estimate of where, when, and why Michel failed. Once more the ultimate personality of Gide's character is not Gide's creation, nor Michel's, but the reader's.

CHAPTER III

LES FAUX-MONNAYEURS

Les Faux-Monnayeurs, considered by Gide to be his only novel, is a work rendered extremely complex by the number of characters and plots which advance simultaneously and interact with one another. No one central theme is evident. In his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs, which traces the development of the novel during its composition, Gide says that his novel has two centers, the first of which is reality itself, the actual event, and the second of which is Édouard's effort to represent that reality in his proposed novel, also entitled Les Faux-Monnayeurs. (XIII, 31) This projected structure necessitates a presentation from two points of view, existing side by side in the finished novel. The representation of actual reality, the first center of attention, is entrusted to a roving narrator, loosely identified with Gide himself. This narrator is relatively objective, assuming the function of an observer-God who is omniscient but powerless to intervene. His direction of the reader's attention from scene to scene contains an element of surrealism in its abrupt departure from the conventions of space and time. The second point of view is that of Édouard the novelist. Édouard, who seems incapable of completing his own projected novel, is a co-author, as it were, of Gide's novel. His journal presents characters and situations in a rather traditional realistic manner, based often on the purely subjective interpretation of its author. Characters are presented,

then, by two representatives of Gide, the roving narrator and Édouard. In one short chapter a supposed author, loosely equivalent to the roving narrator, addresses the reader.

We shall consider first the supposed author, who appears in only one chapter at the end of Part II. He addresses the reader in a familiar tone resembling that of the roving narrator, although he clearly calls himself the author, and at one point refers to the notebook in which he planned his novel. The supposed author interrupts his tale briefly to speculate about the characters he has presented. He compares himself to a traveler who, having arrived at the top of a hill, stops to wonder where his path will lead him.

Ainsi l'auteur imprévoyant s'arrête un instant, reprend souffle, et se demande avec inquiétude où va le mener son récit. (XII, 317)

The author is helpless before the characters he has presented. He is in no way responsible for their actions, as is clear from his remarks about Édouard:

Je crains qu'en confiant le petit Boris aux Azais, Édouard ne commette une imprudence. Comment l'en empêcher? Chaque être agit selon sa loi ... souvent je préférerais ... le voir agir par intérêt... (XII, 317)

The implication of the author's passiveness is clear to the reader. The author very obligingly indicates his own opinions about his characters' previous actions, such as when he states, "Édouard m'a plus d'une fois irrité, ... indigné même." (XII, 318) He also remarks on certain tendencies in their behavior which may cause difficulties in the future, such as Olivier's vanity and Édouard's desire to experiment with human lives. However, his main intent is

to disclaim any control over the behavior of his characters. This point is made when he criticizes the turn of events in his story:

Je ne puis point me consoler de la passade qui lui a fait prendre la place d'Olivier près d'Édouard. Les événements se sont mal arrangés. (XII, 320)

He further indicates his helplessness before the innumerable secondary characters whom he has encountered in following the main course of his story.

... que faire avec tous ces gens-là? Je ne les cherchais point; c'est en suivant Bernard et Olivier que je les ai trouvés sur ma route. Tant pis pour moi; désormais, je me dois à eux. (XII, 321)

The supposed author is a device inserted by Gide to indicate his own passivity before the actions of his characters. He thus leaves them to the mercies of fortune, to their own hidden instincts, or to the often diabolic influence of other characters. Gide himself publicly disclaims all responsibility for them.

The tone of the supposed author is strikingly similar to that of the roving narrator who presents the action of the first seven chapters, intruding only occasionally thereafter. The narrator has the same relationship to reader and characters as the supposed author, he has the same powers of observation, and he is equally willing to admit his limitations. Albert Guerard lists the narrator and the author as two separate voices.³ It seems, however, that since no actual differentiation is made between them in the novel, they may well be considered one person, with a dual responsibility to the reader. The narrator of the first seven chapters conducts the reader,

³Guerard, p. 167-68.

as it were, on a guided tour, pointing out actions of interest and listening in on conversations. The reader is made aware of his presence and of his function by the narrator's frequent first-person intrusions into the narrative, and by several first-person commands.

Non, ce n'était pas chez sa maîtresse que Vincent Molinier s'en allait ainsi chaque soir. Encore qu'il marche vite, suivons-le ... Il s'arrête rue de Babylone devant une porte cochère, qui s'ouvre. Le voici chez le comte de Passavant. (XII, 63)

The narrator injects himself into the novel as an observer. His chief purpose is to choose the action toward which the reader's attention will be directed. He is a selective narrator, guiding the reader to certain specific scenes and regretfully disregarding others. At one point he says:

J'aurais été curieux de savoir ce qu'Antoine a pu raconter à son amie la cuisinière; mais on ne peut tout écouter. (XII, 48)

The narrator is a guide who quite abruptly conducts the reader from one scene to another.

The narrator is allowed to penetrate the thoughts of the characters he observes. He nevertheless protests that he is not completely omniscient. His admissions of imperfect knowledge, such as when he says: "Je ne sais pas trop où [Bernard] dîna ce soir, ni même s'il dîna du tout" (XII, 48), add humor to his presentation. They serve further to define his powers for the reader: he is an omniscient observer, but he sees only what occupies his attention at a given moment. He conducts the reader through space and time without concern for these physical limitations. The reader is not to think, however, that he controls what he merely observes.

The narrator represents another attempt on the part of Gide to give the illusion of free movement to his characters, an illusion which is maintained by the quixotic movements of the narrator.

In the first seven chapters the roving narrator introduces characters with a type of direct statement which occurs only infrequently in later chapters. He shifts abruptly from past to present tense, noting certain aspects of behavior or attitude. He speaks, for example, of Olivier, after having described his surroundings in the past tense.

Combien Olivier Molinier, parmi tous ceux-ci, paraît grave! Il est l'un des plus jeunes pourtant. Son visage presque enfantin encore et son regard révèlent la précocité de sa pensée. (XII, 25)

Whereas the above statement is a description of external appearances, many of the narrator's statements reveal the opinions of his characters.

Olivier admire immensément son ami. Il le sait de caractère résolu; pourtant, il doute encore ... (XII, 51)

Many scenes are recorded entirely in the present tense, giving a sense of immediacy to the narrator's words. However, it is to be noted that the narrator, in spite of his role of on-the-spot reporter, is never an ordinary observer. He records the thoughts of the characters in the same tone of factual presentation. The present tense heightens the reader's feeling that he and the narrator are in the midst of the action, although they maintain a distance appropriate to mere passive observers. The reader and the narrator accompany each other from scene to scene; Gide, who has absented himself from participation in the action, is scarcely missed by the reader.

More frequently the narrator reveals actions, thoughts, and feelings to the reader in the imperfect tense. After the seventh chapter the narrator abandons the present tense almost entirely, losing his refreshing originality by his withdrawal into the past. He undergoes a personality change, behaving like a typical narrator of past action, except for a few isolated instances, when his old personality returns. The use of the past tense is a concession to traditional realistic exposition. A typical example is Bernard's awakening.

Le soleil avait réveillé Bernard. Il s'était levé de son banc avec un violent mal de tête ... Il se sentait abominablement seul et le coeur tout gonflé de je ne sais quoi de saumâtre qu'il se refusait à appeler de la tristesse ... (XII, 123)

The technique of direct statement is given added interest when the narrator seems to observe through the eyes of another person. In describing Vincent he speaks through Lady Griffith.

Lady Griffith aimait Vincent peut-être; mais elle aimait en lui le succès. Vincent était grand, beau, svelte, mais il ne savait ni se tenir, ni s'asseoir, ni se lever. Son visage était expressif, mais il se coiffait mal. (XII, 95)

The description, although accurate enough, is characterized by those faults which would offend Lady Griffith in the appearance of her lover. Another character would be differently impressed by Vincent. The use of a viewpoint other than that of the narrator varies the tone of what might otherwise be rather colorless exposition.

Occasionally the narrator relates in the third person the actual words or thoughts of a character. It is Profitendieu who speaks to Molinier in the following words, although the narrator prefers to report them in indirect statement rather than as a direct quotation.

Dieu merci, ses enfants n'avaient pas de mauvais instincts, non plus que les enfants de Molinier sans doute Car que sert d'interdire ce qu'on ne peut pas empêcher? Les livres qu'on lui défend de lire, l'enfant les lit en cachette. Lui, son système est bien simple: les mauvais livres, il n'en défendait pas la lecture; mais il s'arrangeait de façon que ses enfants n'aient aucune envie de les lire. (XII, 33)

The narrator appears to give his own opinion, but in reality he only reports the words of Profitendieu, emphasizing their pompous irony by reporting them indirectly. The technique allows the reader to hear Profitendieu himself speak, making him more vivid for the reader and at the same time enlivening the narration. The roving narrator is constantly resorting to new attitudes and tones with which to vary his narration. He misses no trick to entertain the reader.

At one point in the story the narrator interrupts his exposition to outline for the reader the five stages in Vincent's development. The absurdity of the device makes it quite humorous. The narrator states simply:

A bien examiner l'évolution du caractère de Vincent dans cette intrigue, j'y distingue divers stades, que je veux indiquer, pour l'édification du lecteur. (XII, 209)

He then proceeds to list the five attitudes through which Vincent progressed in his decision to desert Laura. The device indicates, if anything, Gide's wish to utilize every possibility of character presentation, to make each chapter different from the last. The outline adds information which has not previously been provided, but it can scarcely be considered a serious attempt to represent Vincent for the reader. The reader's opinion of Vincent is in no way altered by the delineation of five separate stages in his development, for the device is too artificial to make any serious impression. The

effect is rather to remind the reader of the presence of the narrator, who has not appeared for many chapters.

Another technique which is employed to present character is the monologue, quoted directly by the narrator. Bernard, the character who most frequently speaks to the reader in long monologues, opens the novel, commenting to himself as he peruses a letter establishing his illegitimacy. His words follow his actions, revealing his feelings and motives directly to the reader. Throughout the novel Bernard's inner debates about the future are revealed to the reader by means of monologues, as when Bernard prepares to leave the sleeping Olivier.

Dans un instant, se dit-il, j'irai vers mon destin. Quel beau mot: l'aventure! Ce qui doit advenir. Tout le surprenant qui m'attend ... Debout, valeureux Bernard! Il est temps. (XII, 90)

He speculates at length upon his actions, questioning whether he was right to succumb to his curiosity. His words attempt to justify his actions, but his conscience clearly troubles him.

Est-ce que c'était mal à moi de lire ces lettres? Si c'avait été mal... non, j'aurais des remords ... Aérons-nous. Gagnons le large! (XII, 92-93)

Bernard's tone is uniquely his own. His words capture his impetuosity, the rapid shift of his mind from one thought to another, his youthful quest for adventure. His words reveal what no amount of indirect presentation could convey as forcefully to the reader. His monologues prepare the reader for later actions, making them more believable.

The narrator includes many dialogues in his presentation which effectively reveal the characters who speak. Lady Griffith's story

about the shipwreck of the "Bourgogne" characterizes her, as do her other speeches to Vincent and to Passavant. Passavant reveals himself to the reader through his speeches. Bernard exposes his inner preoccupations to Olivier on several occasions. He says at one time:

Je sens en moi, confusément, des aspirations extraordinaires, des sortes de lames de fond, des mouvements, des agitations incompréhensibles, et que je ne veux même pas observer, par crainte de les empêcher de se produire.
(XII, 387)

He reveals his love for Laura in a similar manner.

Grace à Laura, mes instincts se sont sublimés. Je sens en moi de grandes forces inemployées. Je voudrais les mettre en service. (XII, 389)

Numerous dialogues are reported in which characters analyze themselves for the benefit of the reader, explaining their motives to some sympathetic listener.

Gide is careful to insist that his characters speak to each other rather than merely to the reader. The novel is not a series of character sketches, but a study of relationships between characters. Most of the dialogues are designed to reflect a mysterious universe of interrelated lives. Dialogues afford numerous opportunities for characters to express their opinions about each other. At one important interview Laura protests when Bernard accuses her of being in love with Édouard.

A vrai dire, je ne sais pas ce que je pense de lui. Il n'est jamais longtemps le même. Il ne s'attache à rien; mais rien n'est plus attachant que sa fuite. Vous le connaissez depuis trop peu de temps pour le juger. (XII, 292)

The relationships between characters are rendered more richly complex when each character is allowed to present his own point of view. Some relationships are sinister, almost diabolic in their influence;

dialogues reveal these forces of evil to the reader. The part of Strouvilhou in the drama of Boris is hinted at in a dialogue with his cousin Léon.

--Je voulais te dire encore... Il doit y avoir, parmi les pensionnaires, un petit Boris. Laisse-le tranquille, celui-là. Il prit un temps, puis ajouta plus bas: --pour le moment. (XII, 384)

Dialogues allow the characters to confront each other in the reader's presence, revealing their attitudes toward each other and toward those whose paths they have crossed. The predominance of the dialogue form adds a dramatic element to the narration. The characters are viewed as they would appear on a stage, in the midst of the complex events which tie them to each other.

Letters from several characters are introduced into the novel, furnishing invaluable psychological information about their writers. Bernard leaves a letter for Profitendieu, expressing his scorn and declaring his new independence. Laura writes to Édouard, pleading his assistance and confessing her love for him. Bernard and Olivier exchange letters, Bernard describing his activities in Saas-Fée, and Olivier revealing his new editorial position with Passavant. The inclusion of these letters clarifies the attitudes of the writers toward certain important situations in their lives. They are much the same as monologues; they elucidate certain relationships existing between characters. They serve the additional purpose of clarifying the writer's attitude toward the recipient, such as Laura's love for Édouard, and Olivier's jealousy of Bernard.

The part which action plays in the revelation of character is negligible. Characters are portrayed in other ways; by their own

words or by the intervention of the narrator into their thoughts. Actions rarely seem to be utilized to reveal them to the reader. Actions in the novel are often determined by chance occurrences rather than by the personality of the actor. Bernard happens upon Édouard's baggage check by the merest accident; he claims Édouard's suitcase impetuously, without reflection. Olivier's friend Armand is one of the few characters whose actions add depth to his characterization. When Armand locks Bernard in Sarah's bedroom, the motive behind his action is unclear to the reader and destined to remain so. His gesture reveals a deeply disturbed personality never to be satisfactorily explained by the narrator's exposition. Armand remains a shadowy figure, disturbing to the reader.

The roving narrator represents one point of view through which Gide introduces his characters. A second point of view is that of Édouard, who keeps a journal in which he notes material for his proposed novel. His observations of reality are transformed somewhat by the purpose for which he intends them. Édouard's journal contains literary theories, personal reflections, opinions concerning other characters closely related to himself, and finally dramatic sketches of characters to be represented in his novel. Édouard, an actor in Gide's novel, plays many roles in his journal. He is first the author of a personal diary; second, he is a would-be novelist; and third, he is a narrator set into Gide's novel. His opinion is subjective or objective depending on whether he describes an intimate associate or a subject for his novel. Édouard's journal most often discusses characters of secondary importance; revelation of the

chief characters is left to the roving narrator.

Édouard's journal presents first Édouard himself and his reactions to his associates. He analyzes himself frequently for the reader.

Je ne suis jamais que ce que je crois que je suis--et cela varie sans cesse Mon coeur ne bat que par sympathie ... je ne me sens jamais vivre plus intensément que quand je m'échappe à moi-même pour devenir n'importe qui. (XII, 109-10)

It is interesting to note that Gide himself made a similar statement in his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs. (XIII, 49) Édouard's journal serves further to clarify Édouard's love for Olivier, a relationship which is evident from certain dialogues. Édouard tells the reader:

... la figure d'Olivier aimante aujourd'hui mes pensées ... elle incline leur cours, et ... sans tenir compte de lui, je ne pourrais ni tout à fait bien m'expliquer, ni tout à fait bien me comprendre. (XII, 129-30)

Personal commentaries of this sort, although not too frequent, furnish valuable information about Édouard.

The primary purpose of Édouard's journal is to present his observations of secondary characters in the novel. The largest portion of his journal is devoted to dialogues in which other characters explain their problems to him under one pretext or another. If Édouard's journal begins as an exposition of literary theories and personal analysis, it rapidly becomes a stage upon which secondary characters play out the drama of their lives. La Pérouse and his wife, Pauline and Oscar Molinier, Profitendieu, all receive the spotlight for a moment in Édouard's journal. Édouard is an observer and reporter, a second intermediary between the reader and Gide's troubled characters.

Édouard presents his characters in a typical realistic manner, beginning usually with a description of the setting and the character. La Pérouse is a typical subject.

La Pérouse est venu m'ouvrir. Il était en bras de chemise et portait sur le tête une sorte de bonnet blanc jaunâtre, où j'ai fini par reconnaître un vieux bas (de Madame de La Pérouse sans doute) dont le pied nu ballottait comme le gland d'une toque contre sa joue. Il tenait à la main un tisonnier recourbé. (XII, 173)

Édouard then allows La Pérouse himself to speak, while Édouard records his problems for the sympathetic reader. The reader is dependent upon Édouard as a reporter, but once more dialogues assure the reader freedom of interpretation.

Only one character is presented by Édouard in a strikingly unusual way. Young Boris is interpreted through the technique of psychoanalysis. In several dialogues with Madame Sophroniska, a trained analyst, Édouard learns of Boris' difficulties, and records the progress of his cure. Because of the extensive analysis which he receives, Boris is probably better understood by the reader than any other character in the novel. Nevertheless, an element of mystery remains in Boris' personality; no amount of analysis is able to reveal his character completely.

The novel, then, is presented from two points of view, both of which are independent of the real author. Édouard represents the novelist confronted with reality; his response is traditional. The roving narrator is somewhat more original. He romps through his narration, adding great vitality and humor to the novel, and constantly employing new techniques of presentation. He very scrupulously allows the characters to speak for themselves as often as

possible. The narrator's careful insistence that he is an observer further liberates the characters from his influence. The reader is encouraged to disbelieve what he relates, although not many readers will take the trouble to question the narrator's presentation.

It may be seen that almost all of Gide's techniques offer each character the freedom to express himself. Gide does not wish to speak on their behalf, nor does he allow his narrators to do so with any authority. Each character has an inner life entirely his own, hidden from all observers. Gide prefers to leave these inner lives relatively unexplored. In his essay, Dostoievsky, Gide distinguishes between two types of novelists, those who order and crystallize the motives of their characters, and those who prefer to leave the depths of the spirit unexplored. (XI,221) Gide himself is one of the latter type. The extreme complexity of his novel prevents him from concentration on any one character, thus allowing all of them a semblance of independent movement. Once having established the freedom of his characters, he leaves them thus, refusing to conclude his novel for the reader. Life goes on beyond the last page. Decisions have been made, events have altered some lives beyond repair, but the characters continue to exist, striving in the same directions and bound by the same or very similar relationships. Edouard exemplifies this attitude of expectancy when he says in the last sentence of the novel: "Je suis bien curieux de connaître Caloub." (XII, 550) The reader will no longer be allowed to observe, the author will cease to record, but the universe of Les Faux-Monnayeurs will continue to revolve.

CONCLUSION

Gide's methods of characterization are motivated by a desire to translate the complexity of the human situation into literature. Humanity is composed of solitary individuals, each one with his own problems, and each one firmly entrenched in his own personality, a fatality from which he cannot escape. Each human individual is extremely complex, defying the comprehension of his fellow beings or even of himself. Alissa and Michel show a great fondness for self-analysis, but they ultimately must confess that they are incapable of absolute lucidity concerning themselves. The numerous characters of Les Faux-Monnayeurs live amid a tangled skein of interrelationships which, by concealing them from the gaze of the reader, prevent a searching analysis of any one character. Thus Gide's solitary individuals escape analysis within the limits of their literary existence.

The problem of interpretation remains. Who will make the definitive judgment of Gide's characters, if Gide tacitly refuses to do so by the techniques he employs? He answers this question for us:

Mon livre achevé, je tire la barre, et laisse au lecteur le soin de l'opération; addition, soustraction, peu importe: j'estime que ce n'est pas à moi de la faire. (JFM, XIII, 61)

Gide has set his universe in motion, a complex universe, relatively unexplored. It will continue to exist even without the reader's attention. But the reader will himself be wiser for having tried to comprehend it.

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