

ESSAY

The Protestant Connection in André Gide's *Les faux-monnayeurs* and French Literary Modernism

CLÉMENTINE FAURÉ-
BELLAÏCHE 

To Joël Bellaïche

Histories of the modernist novel often pair André Gide's *Les faux-monnayeurs* (1925; *The Counterfeiters*) and Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27; *In Search of Lost Time*) as two monuments of French high modernism. There is a striking architectural contrast, though, between Gide's diffuse and free-floating novel and Proust's massive cathedral. *Les faux-monnayeurs* loosely follows an elusive novelist, Édouard, who attempts and fails to write a novel entitled *Les faux-monnayeurs*. As his life haphazardly intersects with the trajectories of a group of adolescents, prominently his nephew Olivier and the young Bernard, a “bastard” whose discovery of his illegitimate birth launches the movement of the text, Édouard's perambulations between Paris and Switzerland converge with an enigmatic traffic in false coins and, like his musings, interweave the themes of sincerity, authority, family, individualism, sexuality, the education of youth, and the question of good and bad influences. The journal that Édouard keeps of his projected novel gives its self-reflexive twist to the text, one that is itself reflected in Gide's own *Journal des faux-monnayeurs* (*Journal of the Counterfeiters*), published in 1926. *Les faux-monnayeurs* is thus informed by a double *mise en abyme*,¹ operating at once from inside and from outside the text.

For many critics, those mirroring games merely amounted to emptying the novel of novelistic substance—*Les faux-monnayeurs* missed the *matter* of life. Julien Gracq compared Gide's novel to an apple tree stripped of its apples, deprived of the “cohésion nucléaire essentielle à tout grand roman” (“nuclear cohesion essential to any great novel”; 177).² Resembling the promise of the work rather than the work itself, it lacked the solid sense of life that characterized the novel as a genre. Albert Thibaudet wrote that “[l]e roman trempe dans l'intelligence comme une fleur coupée dans un verre d'eau. Mais c'est une fleur coupée” (“the novel is soaked in

CLÉMENTINE FAURÉ-BELLAÏCHE is assistant professor of French and francophone studies at Brandeis University, where she specializes in twentieth- and twenty-first-century French and francophone literature. Her forthcoming book is entitled *A “Protestant Air”: André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, Roland Barthes, and the Religion of Literary Modernism*.

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intelligence like a flower in a glass of water. But it is a cut flower”), noting the “abstractness” of a work that he felt was cut off from life (qtd. in Raimond 55). The critic Charles du Bos deplored the sense of “volatilisation” (“volatilization”) that prevented *Les faux-monnayeurs* from having any contact with life (88). In the *Nouvelle Revue française* (NRF) Ramon Fernandez spoke of a “subjectivisme” (“subjectivism”) unable to “coïncider avec la vie” (“coincide with life”), which brought about an undoing of the novel—“le roman se défait” (“the novel undoes itself”)—and threatened the dissolution of the very idea of the novel.

In 1965 Jean-Paul Sartre would on the contrary celebrate the deconstructive quality of *Les faux-monnayeurs* as Gide’s invaluable modernist legacy to the French New Novelists. In his preface to Nathalie Sarraute’s *Portrait d’un inconnu* (*Portrait of a Man Unknown*), Sartre famously coined for *Les faux-monnayeurs* the term “antiroman” (“anti-novel”), which he defined as an endeavor to “contester le roman par lui-même, de le détruire sous nos yeux dans le temps qu’on semble l’édifier, d’écrire le roman d’un roman qui ne se fait pas, qui ne peut pas se faire . . .” (“contest the novel by itself, to destroy it before our eyes while one seems to edify it, to write the novel of a novel that is not being done, that cannot be done . . .”; 7–8). The negative force at work in the novel, which for its first readers made it at once abstract and, as it were, divided from itself, became then the modernist quality par excellence. One dimension of *Les faux-monnayeurs* that is central to its modernist negativity has gone almost entirely ignored, however—that is, the role played by Protestantism in the text. Not only is Édouard, Gide’s novelist manqué, a Protestant, and the religious divide between Protestantism and Catholicism a recurrent theme throughout the narrative, but a Protestant thread also links the entire cast of main characters, who are all connected to one another through the Protestant setting at the center of the novel, the “pension Azaïs-Vedel.” (The closest English equivalent to the French word “pension,” which refers to an educational institution offering room and board, would be “boarding school”; however, because the

terms do not carry the same connotations, I use “pension” throughout this article.)

Literary criticism generally treats Gide’s Protestantism as a mere biographical background, irrelevant to the form of his texts or his theorization of literature.³ However, his confrontation with what Roland Barthes—who came from French Protestant culture as well—once called “la catholicité générale de la France” (“France’s general Catholicity”) was crucial to Gide’s ethos as a writer.⁴ Up until the French Revolution, French Protestants endured persecution and exile. In nineteenth-century France the Protestant adventure seemed to enclose all the destinies of modernity. The counterrevolutionary thinker Joseph de Maistre traced the Revolution back to the Reformation. By desacralizing the church as an institution in the name of individual conscience and the return to scripture, Luther’s insurrection undermined forever the notion of an absolute authority. For Michel Foucault, similarly, the Reformation inaugurated “une crise majeure qui a affecté l’expérience occidentale de la subjectivité” (“the great crisis of the Western experience of subjectivity”; “Le sujet” 228), constituting the ethos of modernity as that of an “attitude critique” (“critical attitude”; *Qu’est-ce que la critique?* 45).⁵ Gide echoed and anticipated these views by envisioning Protestantism not so much as a religious denomination but as a fundamentally anti-institutional principle, an endless source of dissidence and deconstruction. In this sense, religion is treated in his works not as a question of faith but as a question of form: Gide’s Protestantism delineates less a dogma than the contours of an existential attitude, a fundamental posture—a form of life. At a time when aesthetic debates were at once political quarrels and religious wars fought in the name of France’s classicism, Gide’s Protestant difference was central to his elaboration of his version of modernism—an ambivalent “modern classicism,” which would become his literary signature as much as the aesthetic standard of the NRF, the legendary modernist review he cofounded.⁶

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the issue of classicism repeatedly polarized

literary and cultural debates, as William Marx notes in an article devoted to Gide's fellow neoclassicists T. S. Eliot and the extreme-right ideologue Charles Maurras. Maurras advocated a return to a classicism conceived as the aesthetic and political ideal of the eternal France of the Old Regime—an Apollonian classicism purportedly derived from classical Greece and founded on rational clarity, unity, order, and measure. The ferociously anti-Protestant Maurras was one of Gide's crucial interlocutors on the literary scene: his presence delineates the narrative arc of *Les faux-monnayeurs*. He makes his appearance at the very beginning of the novel: Bernard is shown meeting with young *lycéens* in the midst of the emblematically classical landscape formed by the Medici Fountain and the Luxembourg Palace in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris; they are discussing “politique et littérature” (“politics and literature”) and reading *L'Action française*, the nationalist and monarchist daily newspaper directed by Maurras (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 8; *Counterfeiters* 12). In one of the last scenes of the novel, Bernard attends a political meeting exalting the “régénération” (“regeneration”) of France through the unadulterated legacy of the past—precisely the definition of classicism according to Maurras and *L'Action française* (371; 304).⁷

The neoclassical revival reconfigured the literary field at the turn of the twentieth century, in conjunction with the historical developments that marked the establishment of the Third Republic, such as the Dreyfus affair and the separation of church and state in 1905. Fin de siècle neoclassicism was an antimodern reaction pushing back against the “dissolution” and decadence represented by modern individualism. It rejected the artistic “anarchy” of Romanticism in favor of a classicism conceived as an aesthetics of neat contours and precise closures, consecrating the individual's submission to form as an objective and universal principle of delimitation. Romanticism, alternatively, was perceived as “l'individualisme en art” (“individualism in art”; Maurras, “L'individu” 220).⁸ Prone to unbounded sublimities, attracted to the imprecise and the unfinished, it was, by its

essence, antithetical to form. In *Les faux-monnayeurs*, La Pérouse, Édouard's old piano professor, is the quintessential neoclassicist—as outraged by *Hernani* as he is disturbed by a Sturm und Drang frenzy of trombones in a Beethoven symphony. To Romanticism as an art of dissonance, La Pérouse opposes the unity of an “accord parfait continu” (“perfect continuous chord”; Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 180). “Pourquoi voulez-vous me faire admirer ce qui me trouble” (“Why do you want me to admire what troubles me?”; 181), he asks Édouard, formulating the founding principle of the neoclassicist reaction—classical beauty as an antidote to the Romantic sublime, and the organic unity of form set against aesthetic and political trouble.⁹ The quarrel of classicism was informed by a specific cultural and religious geography, which set the North—that is, the Germanic Protestant world—against the South—the Catholic Greco-Latin realm.¹⁰ In this landscape, the Protestant Reformation was perceived as a monumental civilizational rift, which had remapped the Western world—it was the original breach in Catholic universality and the very source of modern individualism.¹¹ Only in connection with this mental geography can Gide's choice of a Protestant setting be grasped in all its significance.

The interweaving of religion, politics, and aesthetics around the notion of classicism and, more broadly, around the very nature of literary form would shape literary debates from the 1890s, marked by the obsession with decadence, until the 1920s, when the “quarrel of classicism” resurfaced after World War I in the context of a vast crisis of civilization that stirred anxieties about the longevity of the classical West.¹² It is precisely the temporality and geography of the classical quarrel that constitute the chronotope of *Les faux-monnayeurs*. The novel ambiguously straddles the prewar and postwar periods, fusing those two historical moments into the same ideological climate. The temporal setting of *Les faux-monnayeurs* is thus not so much a definite period as an atmosphere—themes and ideas circulating in the air and all revolving around the question of classicism and classical form. Likewise, the classical quarrel is

inscribed in the very geography of the novel, fractured in its center by a section taking place in Germanic and Protestant territory, in the Romantic landscape of the Swiss mountains.¹³ The Swiss Alps were always inherently Protestant for Gide; the ascending realm of the sublime, they embodied the very opposite of the classical Greco-Latin South, which was spatially associated with beauty and art:

Me voici de nouveau dans ce pays “que Dieu a fait pour être horrible” (Montesquieu). L’admiration de la montagne est une invention du protestantisme. Étrange confusion des cerveaux incapables d’art, entre l’altier et le beau. . . . Esthétique et moralité de conifères. (Gide, *Journal* 706)

Here I am again in this land “that God created to be horrible” (Montesquieu). The admiration of mountains is an invention of Protestantism. Strange confusion on the part of brains incapable of art, between the lofty and the beautiful. . . . Aesthetics and ethics of conifers. (*Journals* 314)

Crucial to the setting of Gide’s novel, the classical thread is constantly intertwined with Édouard’s theoretical reflection on the form of the novel. It is also inseparable from the issue of the education of youth, which is central to *Les faux-monnayeurs* as a novel of adolescence. Around Édouard, the text installs an effervescent network of mobile adolescents, studying for the modern *baccalauréat*, busy with a Latin version or a *composition française*, and all gravitating around the Protestant educational institution that is the pension Azaïs-Vedel. The intersection of the question of literary form and that of the formation of youth was characteristic of the quarrel of classicism (Guerlac). Partisans of classicism in literature were the most ardent defenders of the classical humanities in school as the mark of France’s indissolubly Greco-Latin and Catholic heritage and as the best way to form young minds and counter the modern plague of individualism. In the 1920s, the Catholic and Neo-Thomist critic Henri Massis denounced Gide as a perilous “Réformateur” (“Reformer”) endangering no less than classical civilization itself

(D’André Gide 47). Before the war Massis had published, under the pen name of Agathon (with Alfred de Tarde), two influential surveys, *L’esprit de la nouvelle Sorbonne* (1911; *The Spirit of the New Sorbonne*) and *Les jeunes gens d’aujourd’hui* (1913; *The Young People of Today*), which attacked the Republican reforms of the “New Sorbonne” as infected by “la métaphysique allemande” (“German metaphysics”; *Les jeunes gens* 55). To the “Protestantization” of academia, Agathon opposed France’s native classical spirit and its Catholic tradition. The world of letters, increasingly divorced from the political and academic world and marked by a strong anti-Protestantism, deplored the Protestant spiritual influence that infused the ideology of the Third Republic. In particular, the involvement of many former Protestant pastors and theologians in the foundation of France’s modern *école laïque* (“secular school”)¹⁴ fed denunciations of the “Kantism” of academia and the “Protestant spirit” invading France, both of which were atmospheric phenomena associated with Germany.¹⁵

Gide’s Protestant pension is thus the space where the two central questions in the novel—the aesthetic question of the novel as form and the eminently political question of the formation of youth—converge, and where aesthetics, politics, and religion intersect. In a narrative where everything and everyone circulates, from coins and books to ideas and individuals, it functions as a textual node where all characters and subplots come together. A hub of transnational circulation, the pension Azaïs-Vedel is the site where the little Boris, coming from Russia through Poland and Switzerland, crosses the slippery path of Strouvillhou, a Nietzschean agitator and former boarder at the pension, who travels between Switzerland and Paris and is at the origin of the traffic in false coins that gives the novel its title. Moreover, insofar as a novel’s setting is where the fictional and the referential meet, the pension is also, crucially, the space where autobiography and fiction merge and where all of Gide’s autobiographical fragments can be recomposed into a multifaceted self-portrait. As the true center of gravity of

Gide's emblematically modernist novel, the puritan pension Azaïs-Vedel invites a reappraisal of the literary importance of Gide's Protestant idiosyncrasy, as well as a reassessment of the persistence of religion within both political modernity and modernist aesthetics.

Transnational Circulation around a Protestant Pension

Le Monod est sans feu ni lieu. . . . Né polyglotte, les frontières lui sont à peu près insensibles. Il y circule donc sans cesse. . . . La France moderne plaît aux Monod. (Maurras, "L'État Monod" 251–52)

The Monod are homeless and landless. . . . They were born polyglots and they are insensitive to borders. They constantly circulate across them. . . . Modern France agrees to the Monod.

A middle-aged novelist, homosexual,¹⁶ and Protestant, Édouard is Gide's ironic alter ego and the mobile focal point of *Les faux-monnayeurs*. The text alternates between third-person narration, in the voice of a playful omniscient narrator who keeps ironizing on his own omniscience, and first-person narration, through Édouard's journal, which recurrently echoes Gide's own *Journal*. At the beginning of the novel, Édouard arrives in Paris coming from England, and then leaves for Saas-Fée, a mountain town in Switzerland, in the second part of the narrative. The novel is structured according to his peregrination: it is composed of three parts, corresponding to the three spaces successively occupied by Édouard: Paris, Saas-Fée, and then Paris again. In constant circulation, Édouard is connected to the other characters in the novel through the pension Azaïs-Vedel, where he was a boarder during what he calls "ma première éducation puritaine" ("my first puritan upbringing"; Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 126) and where he met his former lover, Laura, the pastor Vedel's daughter. Thibaudet wrote that in *Les faux-monnayeurs* autobiography was like ivy—it constantly crept into the novel (Review). The pension Azaïs-Vedel is precisely the space where the autobiographical ivy interlaces with the fictional.¹⁷ Through the various

characters revolving around the pension, Gide explores different facets of his autobiographical self: the nervous child expelled at seven from the Protestant institution L'École Alsacienne for "bad habits" (the little Boris; see Gide, *Counterfeiters* 185), the symbolist debutant and "Christian Narcissus"¹⁸ (Armand Vedel, the pastor's son), the Protestant pastor (the pastor Vedel, whose journal echoes both Édouard's and Gide's own), and, above all, the pedagogue and pederast with a puritan aura and a sulfurous influence on youth (Édouard). Édouard's Protestant formation at the fictional pension replicates Gide's own "puritan education"—the expression is recurrent throughout his work—on Paris's Left Bank, in the sixth arrondissement, such as Gide related it in his memoirs, *Si le grain ne meurt* (*If It Die . . .*), whose first fragments started to appear in the *NRf* in the early 1920s. If geography is a force that shapes literature, Gide inhabited in his youth a mental space that was, although only a few kilometers distant, leagues away from Proust's Right Bank. In fact, before he entered the literary world in the early 1890s, Gide lived in an exotic land, his life mostly confined to the spaces of the *Haute Société Protestante* ("High Protestant Society"), which delineate the map of *Les faux-monnayeurs*. He frequented the École Alsacienne, founded in 1874 by Alsatian Protestants who had chosen to settle in France after its 1870 defeat at the hands of Prussia and the annexation of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine by a newly unified Germany in 1871. He attended Sunday worship and Sunday school at the temple on the rue Madame, a crucial center of the French Protestant *Réveil* ("Revival") in the Quartier Latin,¹⁹ where he heard the evangelical pastor Edmond de Pressensé's sermons; it is there that, in *Les faux-monnayeurs*, the important scene of Laura's wedding takes place. The fictional pension Azaïs-Vedel merges the real M. Vedel, Gide's teacher in elementary school at the École Alsacienne, and the real "institution Keller" or "pension Keller," where Gide was a boarder in the 1880s. The pension Keller was the first Protestant school established in France since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Founded by the

Swiss pedagogue and Revivalist Jean-Paul Keller, it was a *maison d'éducation pour jeunes gens* ("boarding-school") that would welcome the scions of the most prominent French Protestant families as well as many foreign students, whose presence reflected the cosmopolitan dimension of Protestantism at the time, especially within the Revivalist movement.

Gide thus set his novel and installed his alter ego in his native Protestant territory, a microclimate traversed by a network of alien influences, most notably from neighboring England, Germany, and Switzerland, and permeated by the Pietist spirituality of the nineteenth-century Revival. The pension Azais-Vedel is a radiating center of Protestant influence—an atmospheric enclave of foreignness embedded in the sixth arrondissement. When Édouard disdainfully describes its atmosphere as "je ne sais quoi d'ineffablement alpestre, paradisiaque et niais" ("something ineffably alpine and paradisiacal and foolish" (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 104; *Counterfeiters* 94), he thematically connects the moral altitudes of the Protestant pension to the Alpine space occupying the central part of the novel—Switzerland. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth Protestantism was identified in France with the cold realm of the Germanic North, as opposed to the Latin and Catholic South. It was also associated with transnational circulation, from the Huguenot diaspora in the Protestant countries bordering France to the itinerant evangelists of the Protestant Revival who, from 1830 onward, came to France from Switzerland and England to spread the "pure Gospel." Switzerland in particular, Calvin's adopted nation, appeared in this cultural geography as the heartland of Protestantism. In the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair, in the context of fin de siècle anti-Protestantism and the religious wars between the two Frances—traditional Catholic France pitted against "Judeo-Protestant" France—Maurras published in the first issues of *L'Action française* an anti-Protestant pamphlet against the Monods, a prominent Protestant family of pastors and professors who had returned to France from Switzerland

after the French Revolution. In the first article of the series, entitled "Idées françaises, idées suisses" ("French Ideas, Swiss Ideas"), Maurras denounced Protestants as a borderless tribe (even more so than the Jews, he claimed) who embodied the modern peril of uprootedness²⁰ and propagated individualist ideas that were "étrangères" ("foreign") to Catholic France, in particular the "anarchisme évangélique et prophétique" ("prophetic and evangelical anarchism") contained in the Bible (315). The first French anti-Protestant novel, Alphonse Daudet's *L'évangéliste* (1883), already denounced the pervasive "influence" of Protestant Revivalists circulating between England and Switzerland, breaking up families and sowing seeds of dissidence.²¹ If anti-Semitism fantasized about the material circulation of capital, fin de siècle anti-Protestantism was obsessed with the immaterial, aerial circulation of "influences." It was haunted by figures of propagation and dissolution—from the postrevolutionary migrations of exiled Protestant families to the distribution of bibles by Revivalists, reminiscent of the diffusion of the Gospels in vernacular languages after the Reformation. The essential anti-Protestant fixation was on the dissemination of forbidden books, such as Protestant Revivalist tracts, or Protestant bibles, unauthorized by the Catholic Church and prompting an individual and unmediated relationship to the text. Gide thematizes this crucial anxiety in *Les faux-monnayeurs*: one of the opening scenes stages two Catholic father figures discussing the influence of "bad books" on youth while evoking the other illegal circulation of the novel, that of false coins. From this moment on, books, like coins, never cease circulating within the text.²²

The anti-Protestant imagination pit the dissolving force of this network of circulation against the whole, rooted organism of the nation as a social form. During the 1920s, when anti-Protestantism disappeared from the political scene but persisted in the literary field,²³ the violent attacks against Gide and his "dissolving influence" were inseparable from his embodying the Protestant itinerant spirit and the perils of its contagion. In 1921, Massis wrote a famous article entitled "L'influence d'André Gide"

("Gide's Influence"), in which he conflated Gide's nomadism and his immoralism. With Édouard, who circulates between England, France, and Switzerland, Gide toyed with his own literary persona, as well as with representations of the transnational circulation of "Protestant influence." The entire text is based on the trope of circulation, the trafficking of false coins being redoubled by the diffusion of books and the displacements of the novel's uprooted protagonists. In fact, *Les faux-monnayeurs* self-consciously presents itself as "un réseau" ("a network")²⁴ whose nexus consists in the microcosm of Protestant ambience delimited with precision in the novel by the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, the rue d'Assas, and the rue Madame. Those streets mapped the first immediate area of influence of the *NRf*, first domiciled on the Rue d'Assas, at the address of another Protestant from a renowned family, Jean Schlumberger. The review moved later to the rue Madame. In the 1920s the *NRf* would be recurrently compared to a "Huguenot chapel" and a "Protestant temple," and its founders to a bunch of "Protestant pastors" whose literary preaching endangered French youth. Hence Gide's quotational irony when he mentions the "petite chapelle de la rue Madame" ("the little chapel in rue Madame"; *Les faux-monnayeurs* 108; *Counterfeiters* 90)—which can, in this context, refer as much to the Protestant chapel of his novel as to his modernist review.²⁵

Formations, Deformations, and Literary Form

Daudet's *L'évangéliste* was mostly concerned with the influence of evangelical Protestantism on youth. *Les faux-monnayeurs* uses the setting of the pension to make the theme of Protestant influence inseparable from the issues of youth and education: "C'est le grand-père qui a pris en main l'éducation aussi bien que l'instruction des jeunes" ("The young people's moral upbringing, as well as their education, has been taken in hand by the grandfather"), Édouard writes about its founder, Azaïs (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 117).²⁶ In that sense, Gide's novel is part of a larger literary and cultural phenomenon associated with what Denis Pernot

identified as the emergence of the French "roman de socialisation" ("novel of socialization") as a genre preoccupied with "forming" youth. In fact, the quarrel of classicism was not just about literary form; at the turn of the twentieth century, it was inseparable from the highly political question of the formation of the modern individual, and in particular from the intense preoccupation with the establishment of France's Republican secular education and the "Protestantization" of its pedagogy. During Laura's wedding, in the temple of the rue Madame, Édouard plays on these anxieties when he evokes the continuity between pastorship and pedagogy (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 109; *Counterfeiters* 91). This Protestant trait had characterized the historical affinities between Protestantism and education since the Reformation; it also explained the intense involvement of French Protestants in the foundation of France's modern secular education.

The adolescents of *Les faux-monnayeurs* are thus surrounded by adults intensely preoccupied with their "formation" (a recurrent term in the novel, like "education"): from the old Azaïs to the pastor Vedel to Édouard himself. Like his nemesis in the novel, the Catholic Robert de Passavant, Édouard writes preeminently for youth, and throughout the novel it is a fundamental idea that literature is formative. All the pedagogical figures are distributed along religious lines.²⁷ It is a Protestant connection that brings together Édouard and the young Olivier, his future lover. When the novel begins, Édouard's half sister, Pauline, asks Édouard to act as a Protestant educator: "Les enfants sont élevés dans la religion catholique; mais elle se souvient de sa première éducation protestante, et bien qu'elle ait quitté le foyer de notre père commun au moment où ma mère y est entrée, je découvre entre elle et moi maints traits de ressemblance" ("The children have been brought up as Catholics; but she remembers her early Protestant training, and though she left our father's home at the time my mother entered it, I discover many points of resemblance between her and me"; *Les faux-monnayeurs* 103–04; *Counterfeiters* 87). The text weaves many

connections between the pastor Vedel, the writer Édouard, and Gide himself as being three kinds of educators. The continuity between the pastor Vedel and the novelist Édouard alludes to Gide's contemporaries who attacked him as an inverted pastor preaching individualism to modern youth. Like Gide himself in his *Journal*, Édouard devotes many a reflection to education, which he recommends should be based on constraint—puritan, then, if not in substance but in form.

The genre of the “novel of socialization” presupposed that literature formed youth—hence the posture of authority assumed by the emblematic practitioners of the genre, such as Paul Bourget and Maurice Barrès, both cited in *Les faux-monnayeurs*. Édouard conceives of his writing, on the contrary, as a paradoxical, anti-authoritarian “formation.” He does not write to form youth so much as he writes for “unformed” beings: “Fournir un aliment à des curiosités indistinctes, satisfaire à des exigences qui ne sont pas encore précisées, de sorte que celui qui n'est aujourd'hui qu'un enfant, demain s'étonne à me rencontrer sur sa route” (“To provide food for curiosities still unformed, to satisfy requirements not yet defined so that the child of to-day may be astonished tomorrow to find me in his path”; *Les faux-monnayeurs* 107; *Counterfeiters* 90). Those unfinished, imprecise selves elude the neat contours of classical description because they escape form—they are, on the contrary, “in formation”: “Rien n'est plus difficile à observer que les êtres en formation. Il faudrait pouvoir ne les observer que de biais, de profil” (“Nothing is more difficult to observe than creatures in the period of formation. One ought to look at them only sideways—in profile”), Édouard writes (99; 83). Gide here displaces the meaning of “formation”—from the idea of “imparting form” he drifts to the notion of “becoming.” In Aristotelian terms, form is what defines matter. Form gives its unity to a being by actualizing its potentiality and determining its becoming. On the contrary, Gide places the accent on “formation” as an indefinite, unoriented process.²⁸ As a novelist, he is interested in potentiality rather than actuality. Hence his love for adolescents—beings in the

constant inchoative process of being formed. For Fernandez, Gide's passion for the formation of a character as a mere reservoir of potentialities was the main reason for the formal dissolution of *Les faux-monnayeurs* and its inability to embrace actual life. Fernandez was right indeed to superimpose the formation of the Gidian self and the form of Gide's novel: Édouard does not separate them. Talking about the journal he keeps of the progress of his novel, he explains to his friends: “oui, c'est une sorte de journal que je tiens, comme on ferait celui d'un enfant” (“yes, it's a kind of diary that I keep as one might do of a child”; *Les faux-monnayeurs* 207; *Counterfeiters* 170). In his *Journal des faux-monnayeurs*, Gide too conflates those two formal processes when he compares his novel to a growing plant whose proliferative formation cannot be precisely contained within the totality of a beautiful form. The gardener and the novelist are for Gide two “pedagogues,” attentive to forms and formations.²⁹

In 1922, just as he was writing *Les faux-monnayeurs*, Gide gave several important lectures on Fyodor Dostoevsky where he thought about the question of formation together with that of literary form, while connecting both to the question of religion. The context of those lectures is crucial to the religious setting of the pension Azais-Vedel and, more broadly, to the entire geography of *Les faux-monnayeurs*. It is inseparable from what Gide does topographically with the novel, as he uproots it and opens up its Latin contours not only to Northern and Germanic zones of influence but also to the Slavic East, through the Russian character of Boris, who comes straight out of a Dostoevsky novel.

Gide's Reformation of Dostoevsky

It was in one of his lectures on Dostoevsky that Gide made his famous modernist pronouncement—“c'est avec les beaux sentiments qu'on fait la mauvaise littérature” (“it is with good sentiments that bad literature is made”; *Essais critiques* 637). His intervention on Dostoevsky was both a continuation of the quarrel over classicism and another

episode in the religious wars waged on the literary field, in the context of postwar anxieties about the longevity of Western civilization. At the time, conservative and nationalist critics denounced Dostoevsky as estranged from the French genius, whose classical and Catholic spirit was inherently rational and logical and whose order was founded on unity. Gide opened his talks on the opposition between Dostoevsky's characters and the "Western man"—the French man in particular. Further on, he contrasted the Latin Catholic West and the Eastern world. In that configuration he positioned Dostoevsky as an evangelical figure, the least Catholic of all writers and the most Christian: "Je ne connais point d'auteur à la fois plus chrétien et moins catholique" ("I do not know of an author who is at once more Christian and less Catholic"; *Essais critiques* 626). Throughout his talks Gide insisted on Dostoevsky's unmediated relationship to the Gospel and his "evangelism," which he identified with true Christianity and set against Catholicism, pursuing his familiar dialogue with the Catholics about the Protestant perils of free interpretation and the individual and direct contact with the message of Christ. He also connected Dostoevsky's relationship to Christ to that of the Protestant Friedrich Nietzsche, whose thinking he had celebrated in 1899 as the endpoint of Protestantism and as "la plus grande libération possible" ("the greatest liberation possible"; 35). To the dyad Dostoevsky-Nietzsche, he added Jean-Jacques Rousseau, another "reformer" and the third star in his evangelical constellation. As a Protestant and a precursor to Romanticism, the symbol of the importation of "Swiss ideas" into France, Rousseau had polarized the cultural and religious quarrels of the early twentieth century. Pierre Lasserre's *Le Romantisme français*, published in 1907, which denounced Rousseau as the source of the Romantic sensibility and decadent individualism, had a tremendous intellectual effect in this respect. By introducing Rousseau in the Dostoevsky-Nietzsche connection, Gide intertwined the Germanic and Eastern threads of his literary lineage and interwove an "Oriental" filiation, at once

Russian and Protestant, which he opposed to Western Catholic Latinity.

In his lectures Gide focused on the Dostoevskian character, whom he described as marked by an "inquiétante dualité" ("disturbing duality"; 604) and a sense of unfinishedness. The civilizational foreignness of Dostoevskian characters lay, Gide argued, in their extreme individuality. They were creatures of contradiction and ambivalence; torn between extremes, they questioned the very notion of a unified subjectivity. For Gide, this new literary being was alien to French readers accustomed, both in fiction and in real life, to characters who were already formed, at once coherent and closed. It was a self in progress, with indeterminate contours. Dostoevsky's heroes were always in formation—unformed, and suffused with the chiaroscuro of the text: "Ses principaux personnages restent toujours en formation, toujours mal dégagés de l'ombre. Je remarque en passant combien profondément il diffère par là de Balzac dont le souci principal semble être toujours la parfaite conséquence du personnage" ("His main characters remain always in formation, always barely distinguished from the shadows. I notice in passing how deeply in that sense he differs from Balzac, whose main concern seems always the perfect consequence of the character"; 559). Gide set this formless character against French literature's taste for form, its "horreur de l'informe, qui va jusqu'à une certaine gêne devant ce qui n'est pas encore formé" ("horror for what is formless [*l'informe*], which goes as far as a kind of embarrassment in front of what is not yet formed"; 606). For Gide it was precisely because of Dostoevsky's evangelism that his characters appeared wildly illogical and that his novelistic art so greatly differed from Honoré de Balzac's "Western" novel. Dominated by the unifying force of will and intelligence, Balzacian characters were consistent, "consequent" with themselves. Alternatively, Dostoevsky's evangelical heroes renounced intelligence and allowed contraries to cohabit within themselves: they were not "one." Gide thus contrasted Balzac's Latin Catholicism with Dostoevsky's Eastern and

Christian “doctrine purement évangéliste” (“purely evangelical doctrine”; 591).

Massis denounced Gide’s lectures on Dostoevsky as a subversion of the “précepte latin et catholique” (“Catholic and Latin precept”; *D’André Gide* 103), which consisted of privileging generality over particularity and subordinating the individual to the formal principle of unity. In the Catholic worldview, human beings and novelistic characters conformed to a universal pattern—to a common form that preceded them. On the contrary, to give precedence to the individual and the particular led to duality and threatened a dissolution of both self and society. For Massis, Gide undermined the very foundations of the Latin and Catholic West, as he gave himself to Dostoevsky’s faith, “cette sombre foi où Maurras reconnaîtrait ‘une de ces variétés du christianisme indépendant qui sévirent dans les déserts orientaux ou dans la forêt germanique, c’est-à-dire aux divers ronds-points de la barbarie’” (“this dark faith where Maurras would recognize one of those ‘avatars of independent Christianity that prospered in Oriental deserts or in Germanic forests, that is, at the various crossroads of barbarity’”; 103). In the 1890s Maurras had exalted the return to classicism against the anarchist, formless art of those aesthetic Huguenots, the Romantics, whom he associated with the Germanic Reformation. In 1925, when *Les faux-monnayeurs* was published, the notion of form was again at the center of the quarrel. That same year, in his *Défense de l’Occident* (*Defense of the West*), Massis presented the Reformation as the breach through which the anarchist and mystical individualism of the East threatened to penetrate the Latin and Catholic order and “decompose” its form. In fact, the quarrel of classicism could never have persisted so long, and with such intensity, were it not that “classicism” referred to so much more than an aesthetics. It engaged a whole anthropology in which form expressed the ratio ordaining the universe—that is, the interpenetration and integration of the material and the spiritual realms, their unity, and as such the very order and intelligibility of the world and the self. Classicism was thus inseparable from Catholicism

as founded on what Massis called “l’unité de l’être universel” (“the unity of the universal being”), which the “classical man” acknowledged as “sa règle, sa loi et la forme entière de l’humaine condition” (“his rule, his law, and the entire form of the human condition”; *D’André Gide* 102; my emphasis). Catholicism, more than a religious faith, constituted a formal principle, founding a homology of structure between religion, aesthetics, and politics and sharing with classicism the same sense of proper delimitations.

“You Have No Idea What a Puritan Bringing-up Can Do to One”

The question of duality—the inner “dissonance” of the subject—recurs in *Les faux-monnayeurs*. Michael Lucey has restored the centrality of homoeroticism to Gide’s modernism, and in particular to *Les faux-monnayeurs*. He connects the representation of homoerotic desire to the fundamental discontinuity of the Gidian subject, identifying sexuality as an undoing force that dissolves the consistency of the self (108–42). In *Les faux-monnayeurs*, this undoing of the subject is also crucially related to the Protestant self, whose essentially introspective posture implies a fundamental self-division. It is important in this respect to note that Édouard, the pastor Vedel, and Gide himself have a crucial practice in common: the three of them keep a *journal intime*—a diary. For the diary is precisely the site where the self-divided subject experiences its own inconsistency and duality. The pastor Vedel uses his as a tool of pious yet unavailing self-reformation, and in particular to confess his secret “vice,” either smoking or masturbating (the two possibilities are considered in the text), both of which evoke Gide’s own *Journal*, in which Gide regularly confesses to succumbing either to cigarettes or to onanism. In *Les faux-monnayeurs* and in Gide’s entire work, the daily and dutiful activity of keeping a diary is always associated both with Protestant “self-examination” and with some kind of education and formation of the self. The formal continuity that connects the pastor Vedel’s religious reformatory diary to

Édouard's and Gide's secular formative ones corresponds to what Pierre Pachet identified as the religious genealogy of the modern *journal intime*, insisting on its emergence in the Protestant world and its Pietist origins. For Pachet, the diary registers the privatization and laicization of spiritual work, accomplished without the mediation of a confessor or recourse to a religious rite (Pachet 7–15). He identifies François Fénelon as the great precursor of the genre, which he connects with the emergence of a problematically fragile individuality, always on the verge of dissolution and always to be worked on because of its inconsistency. Gide cites Fénelon in *Les faux-monnayeurs*, and he alludes to the theological quarrel of Quietism. Quietism, associated both with an unmediated and intimate relationship to God and with a passive dissolution of the soul in order to welcome God within, was condemned by the Catholic Church—in fact, in 1923 Massis accused Gide, too, of being inspired by a “trouble quiétiste” (“Quietist trouble”; *D'André Gide* 108), while Gide exalted Dostoevsky's “Quietism” in his lectures. Pachet explains that Fénelon's Quietism, especially in its insistence on the inconsistency of the self and its daily perfecting of the soul, although condemned in Catholic France, had a great influence in Protestant countries, and especially in Pietist milieus, where it informed the emerging genre of the Pietist diary (Pachet 28). Gide alludes precisely to this Pietist genealogy when he mentions the old Azäis's pedagogical practice of inviting his students to keep notebooks registering their self-improvement. From the secularization and transformation of this religious practice, Pachet shows, the modern subject emerged as fragile and contradictory, along with the notion that the self is a task.

In *Les faux-monnayeurs*, most Protestant characters embody this notion of a self in progress, always uncertain of its own reality. Armand Vedel exemplifies the “perversion de l'intériorité” (“perversion of interiority”) that Barthes described when he was asked what it meant to be a Protestant.³⁰ Armand compares himself—an echo of Gide's first authored text, *Le traité du Narcisse* (1891)—to Narcissus. An example of self-reflexivity

pushed to the extreme, he is relentlessly divided from his own self: “Quoi que je dise ou fasse, toujours une partie de moi reste en arrière, qui regarde l'autre se compromettre, qui l'observe, qui se fiche d'elle et la siffle, ou qui l'applaudit. Quand on est ainsi divisé, comment veux-tu qu'ont soit sincère?” (“Whatever I say or do, there's always one part of myself which stays behind, and watches the other part compromise itself, which laughs at and hisses it, or applauds it. When one is divided in that way, how is it possible to be sincere?”; Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 395; *Counterfeiters* 325). The Protestant self is fundamentally split, and prone to variations. Strouvillou, the Nietzschean villain of the novel and a former student at the pension, is as deficient in unity as Armand: “Je varie” (“I vary”), is how he defines himself (113; 94). He represents yet another autobiographical avatar of Gide, whose posture as a writer was that of an oscillation between extremes. He is also an echo of Massis's attacks on the varying and inconsistent nature of the Gidian self in his article “Petite histoire des variations” (“A Small History of the Variations”), whose title echoed Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet's famous seventeenth-century anti-Protestant *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes* (*The History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*), which denounced Protestantism as a protean heresy, dissolved into a plurality of churches and hence unable to found Truth as One (Massis, *D'André Gide* 211–31). The same self-division and variability characterize Édouard, too, who is associated with a constant derealization or “volatilization” of the self. In fact, Édouard cannot believe in the reality of his own self. His contours remain imprecise—“si elle n'était pas là pour me préciser, ma propre personnalité s'éperdrerait en contours trop vagues” (“if she were not there to give definition to my personality, it would vanish in the excessive vagueness of its contours”; Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 80; *Counterfeiters* 67–68). This uncertainty about his own self—a manner of “dépersonnalisation” (“depersonalization”; 109; 91)—is precisely what nurtures his creativity as a novelist. All gravitating around the pension, those fictional Protestant characters are so many

possible incarnations of Gide, and through them he experiments with his own variations. They constitute the multifaceted portrait of a centrifugal self, in whom contraries cohabit and whose point of origin is the Protestant pension, where the autobiographical and the fictional converge. Gide's self-reflexive novel is thus the space of the incessant fictionalization of a highly volatile self. Fiction emerges as a technology of the self, in which self-construction and self-deconstruction are imbricated and inseparable.

To the inner duality associated with the formation at the pension Vedel, the text opposes a pedagogical model based on unity, represented by the Polish psychoanalyst Sophroniska,³¹ whom Édouard encounters in Switzerland. Sophroniska is in charge of the little Boris, who suffers from a nervous disorder and very much resembles Gide as a child—if only because of their common “bad habits,” which resulted in Gide being expelled from the École Alsacienne. (Sophroniska attributes Boris's malady to his repression of the shameful secret of masturbation.) French by his father and Russian by his mother, Boris is the product of hybridization—an Eastern import in Western land. Saying one thing and its contrary, at once pure and impure, Boris perplexes Sophroniska with his duality. A contradictory character torn between extremes, he comes out of Dostoevsky's “formless” universe and questions what Massis would have identified as the Catholic and classical foundations of Western civilization—logic and rationality. In fact, the text constantly underlines the “Catholicity” of the psychoanalytical method. As an educator, Sophroniska, who hails from Catholic Poland, aims mostly at “confesser entièrement” (“obtaining a full *confession*”) from her pupil (226; 183), and Édouard notes her magical belief in sacramental efficacy.³² The name Sophroniska evokes Gide's own analyst in Paris, Eugénie Sokolnicka, as well as the wisdom and equilibrium associated with classical philosophy: the Greek word *sophron* means wise, and *sophrosyne* refers to the quality of temperance. In Greek philosophy, *sophrosyne* brings about harmony and, above all, unity, both within the individual and within the community. Sophroniska thus

embodies psychoanalysis understood as classicism applied to psychology and meant to reunify the self. She is in fact a partisan of classical clarity, which analytical free association, by purifying dark psychological recesses, is supposed to restore in the soul. Catholic confession is crucial in this respect. As a sacrament, confession is a rite of reintegration: it reunifies the individual while reuniting the individual with the community; it consecrates the participation in a common form. In fact, among Gide's contemporaries, many critics found his characters unclassical and insufficiently real, precisely because they were Protestant. Gide's uncertain selves plunged into idealism because they were cut off from community and separated from the historical and mystical body of the church—that is, for Catholics, from the very foundation of reality.

The Puritan Dream of a Pure Novel

This issue of realism has important consequences for the aesthetics of Gide's novel. Here again the setting of the Protestant pension plays a crucial role, as the space where the formation of the self intersects with the form of the novel. Most of Édouard's reflections on the novel as a form revolve around a critique of realism, which is in fact closely related to the question of classicism. For Édouard, Balzac's realism is synonymous with subservience to the real and to mimetic resemblance, which he contrasts, quoting Nietzsche, with “cette formidable érosion des contours” (“that formidable erosion of contours”) characterizing ancient Greek tragedies or French seventeenth-century classical theater (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 203; *Counterfeiters* 167). Édouard elects those classical works not as exemplifying the aesthetics of clear delimitations—most importantly between subject and object—favored by the neoclassicists, but on the contrary as works that blur the “contours” of reality, works that are distanced from life. The presence of Balzac in *Les faux-monnayeurs* echoes Gide's critique of the Balzacian novel in his 1922 lectures on Dostoevsky. In fact, the pension Azaïs-Vedel is Gide's modernist response to Balzac's realist

pension Vauquer in *Le Père Goriot*. Gide insists on its Puritan smell, an abstract analogy for the pension Vauquer's very concrete "odeur de pension" ("boarding house smell"; Balzac 27): "société presque exclusivement protestante. Odeur puritaine très spéciale" ("[t]he society was exclusively Protestant. The odour of Puritanism is peculiar to itself"), Édouard notes in his diary (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 112; *Counterfeiters* 94). A spiritual milieu, Gide's pension responds to Balzac's powerfully material one, exactly as Édouard's novelistic idealism responds to Balzacian realism. For neo-classicists like Maurras and Massis, classicism consisted of the healthy sense of an objective reality exterior to the subject. As such it was opposed to "subjectivism"—a recurrent criticism made about Gide—and to the Kantian idealism and "Germanic vagueness" that were associated with the antecedence of individual consciousness found in Protestantism. The Protestant Gide, Lasserre once wrote, acted as if individual conscience were alone in this world—unprecedented and disconnected from the real (Review). Classicism was thus a form of realism, in the strong, philosophical sense of the term. As Thibaudet wrote, Maurras's thought was "une philosophie des solides, de l'être concret, achevé et plastique, un réalisme . . . qui porte tout accent sur le substantiel et le massif" ("a philosophy of solids, of the concrete being, with an aesthetic shape, a realism . . . which stresses the substantial and the massive"; *Les idées* 13). Hence the Catholicity of his classicism, which was modeled on the solidity and precision of Catholic theology. The Neo-Thomist Catholics of the 1920s, too, insisted on classicism as promoting the solid unity of the real, informed, as Massis wrote in his attack on Gide, citing Jacques Maritain, by the "synthèse classique de la nature et de l'esprit" ("classical synthesis of spirit and nature"; *D'André Gide* 113). Maritain opposed this "réalisme intégral" ("integral realism") to Kant's idealism, which he believed was born out of the Lutheran Reformation and which he perceived as the origin of the inner dissonance characterizing the modern individual, hermetically plunged into its own

consciousness, at once cut off from reality and divorced from itself.³³

Les faux-monnayeurs often alludes to Édouard's deficient sense of reality and his idealism. It is in the Swiss mountains that Édouard evokes his two diaries—a proper *journal intime*, devoted to the formation of his own self, and the diary that follows the formation (or what he calls the "gestation" ["gestation"]) of his novel (Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 208; *Counterfeiters* 170). This diary, he explains, contains the critique of his novel. Through the form of the diary, the self-reflexivity of the novel is thus connected to the Protestant self-examining and essentially self-critical, self-negating subject. In a crucial aesthetic conversation, Édouard defends a perilously abstract notion of the novel, in which ideas would supersede reality, and the story of the formation of the novel, the novel itself. To this disembodied notion of a novel of pure ideas the young Bernard opposes the realist importance of actual facts. At that point in the novel Édouard, who is then sojourning in Protestant land, is indeed at his most abstract and self-reflexive—at his most Protestant. Édouard's lack of ontological realism is ironically connected to the novel's setting in the pension Azaïs-Vedel as the privileged site of abstract idealism. In the only "realistic" description of the novel, precisely as Édouard is seeing through Olivier's Catholic eyes, the Protestant "small chapel" suddenly appears to him in all its abstractness and puritanical negation of the real and the visible: "il me semblait que je voyais à sa place et pour la première fois ces murs nus, l'abstraite et blafarde lumière où baignait l'auditoire, le détachement cruel de la chaire sur le mur blanc du fond" ("I felt as if, like him, I were seeing for the first time the bare walls, the abstract and chilly light which fell upon the congregation, the relentless outline of the pulpit on the background of the white wall"; 109; 91). This Protestant theological distancing from reality founds an aesthetics of the pension—imbued with vagueness, made of imprecision and unfinishedness. Madame Vedel's nebulous subjectivism echoes Édouard's own idealist theory of the novel as eroding the overly precise contours of reality: "Fait de l'infini avec de l'imprécis et de l'inachevé" ("She reaches the infinite

by way of the indeterminate and the indefinite"; 117; 213). Those pronouncements echo familiar criticisms of Gide's works as Protestant hybrids of art and metaphysics. Eroded by idealism, insulated from life, they were often perceived as purely negative works. The Protestant pension Azaïs-Vedel is thus a preeminently aesthetic space, which connects the Vedels' moral puritanism, Édouard's aesthetic purism—his dream of a "pure novel" eliminating the particulars of reality—and Gide's own modernism, understood as a transformation and aestheticization of his Protestant ethos.

The pension Azaïs-Vedel is thus the site where Gide interweaves all the threads of his novel: the fictional and the autobiographical, as well as the political question of the formation of the modern individual, the aesthetic question of literary form, and the religious question of Protestantism. The Protestant pension at the core of *Les faux-monnayeurs* exerts a centrifugal force, launching its characters in all directions, elusive selves without a form, while remapping the space of the French novel and dissolving, through critical self-reflexivity, the classical and Catholic notion of the real. In the image of the Gidian self, Gide's novel is a work in progress, in formation, without the closure of a proper ending, and characterized by a fundamental self-division and openness. In fact, *Les faux-monnayeurs*, in contrast to Édouard's puritan dream of a "pure novel," opens up its own contours; evangelically renouncing its own aesthetics, it integrates its very opposite: the accidents of reality—Boris's suicide, for instance, which Édouard dismisses as an unwelcomed intrusion in his own novel but which still finds its way into Gide's. Proust conceived of *La recherche du temps perdu* as a cathedral. Open to all winds, Gide's work is not even a house—a road novel perhaps, nomadic and without limits.

NOTES

My gratitude to Paul Franz, a fine and loyal reader.

1. Dällenbach identifies Gide as the origin of the literary conceptualization of the *mise en abyme*.

2. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

3. One needs here to except Gide's biographer, Frank Lestringant, who stresses the importance of Gide's Protestant difference with regard to his posture as an intellectual.

4. "Que ne découvrirait-on pas, si l'on se mettait à tirer toutes les conséquences mondaines de la catholicité générale de la France?" ("What might we not discover, were we to draw all the worldly consequences of France's Catholicity?"), Barthes asks in parentheses in the article "Ouvriers et pasteurs" ("Workers and Pastors"; *Essais critiques* 132; *Critical Essays* 125).

5. From Hegel to Max Weber, many thinkers have connected the Reformation with the advent of modernity.

6. On the aesthetic ambiguity of the *NRf*, which strove to balance classicism and modernity, see Koffeman.

7. For a recent reevaluation of the importance of politics and its relationship to literary form in *Les faux-monnayeurs*, see Wittman.

8. Maurras declared in an influential aesthetic, political, and religious formula: "L'individualisme religieux s'appelle la Réforme ou le libre examen; l'individualisme politique s'appelle la Révolution; l'individualisme dans l'art, c'est le Romantisme" ("Religious individualism is called the Reformation or free examination; political individualism is called the French Revolution; individualism in art is Romanticism"; "L'individu" 220).

9. I am here giving my translation, which is closer to the French original. For the published English version, see Gide, *Counterfeiters* 148–49.

10. On the aesthetic importance of the Germanic races versus Latin races paradigm, see Michaud.

11. On the French imaginary of Protestantism in relation to political modernity, see Bernard-Griffiths et al.

12. On Gide and the quarrel of classicism as crucial to French literary history in the first half of the twentieth century, see Murat; Marty.

13. On the theme of high mountains in the eighteenth century and its relationship to the aesthetics of the sublime, see Saint Girons.

14. On the affinities between the French Protestants and the Republic, see Cabanel, *Les protestants*; Cabanel and Encrevé.

15. Fédi has studied how the philosophy of Kant was, in fin de siècle France and further into the twentieth century, received as both German and Protestant, and how the figure of Kant was crucial to French ideological debates and in particular to anti-Protestant discourses.

16. I use here the word *homosexual*, although Gide defended, especially in his treatise *Corydon*, the model of Greek pederasty, which was for him inseparable from its pedagogical dimension and which does not translate exactly into the modern conception of homosexuality. On the ideal of pederasty in Gide, see Lucey.

17. Lejeune speaks of Gide's work as forming a vast "espace autobiographique" ("autobiographical space") where the autobiographical is constantly reversed and rewritten into the fictional (see 165–96).

18. Maurras once used this expression to describe Gide (Review).

19. On the nineteenth-century French Protestant *Réveil*, see Cabanel, *Histoire*.

20. The issue of uprootedness, which prompted the “quarrel of the poplar” opposing Gide and Maurras, was also at the heart of *Les déracinés* (*The Uprooted*), one of the emblematic romans à thèse of the period and the work of the nationalist writer Maurice Barrès, a fundamental ideological adversary for Gide. Wampole has studied the quarrel in depth and traced the metaphor of rootedness in her book *Rootedness: The Ramifications of a Metaphor*.

21. In his novel Daudet connects the two great hatreds of modernity, since the Protestant evangelist villain is married to a Jewish banker.

22. Prince has studied the circulation of texts among the characters of the novel, all of whom are not only readers but also potential novelists.

23. See Baubérot and Zuber.

24. “[V]oilà qui tisse entre nous un réseau, dont il ne tient qu’à moi de resserrer les mailles” (“Look who is weaving a net between us, of which it is up to me to fasten the links”; Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs* 173).

25. In those years the noisiest campaign of hatred came from Henri Béraud, who attacked the review as a Protestant “chapel” whose influence endangered French youth and threatened to “imposer chez nous le snobisme huguenot” (“impose Huguenot snobbery on France”; 24).

26. My translation here is slightly modified from the published English version (Gide, *Counterfeiters* 98).

27. This connects *Les faux-monnayeurs* to several French novels of formation in the 1920s that were organized around the religious divide, such as Roger Martin du Gard’s *Les Thibault* and Jacques de Lacretelle’s *Silbermann*.

28. In *Le roman d’aventures* (*The Adventure Novel*), an influential essay that Gide greatly admired, Jacques Rivière theorized the new novel precisely as the form of a fundamentally open and hesitant self, who discovers as much as it invents itself.

29. “Ah! quelle bonne école qu’un verger, qu’un jardin! et quel bon pédagogue, souvent, on ferait d’un horticulteur!” (“Oh! an orchard or a garden is an excellent school! And a horticulturist would often make the best of pedagogues!”; *Les faux-monnayeurs* 164; *Counterfeiters* 136).

30. “Je pourrais dire à la rigueur avec la plus grande prudence, qu’une adolescence protestante peut donner un certain goût ou une certaine perversion de l’intériorité, du langage intérieur, celui que le sujet se tient constamment à lui-même” (“I might say, with the greatest caution, that a Protestant adolescence can provide a certain taste for, or a certain perversion of interiority, of the inner language, of this constant dialogue of the subject with himself”; Barthes, *Le grain* 247).

31. *Les faux-monnayeurs* is the first French novel in which psychoanalysis is mentioned.

32. “Sans croire elle-même aux dogmes de l’Église, elle croit à l’efficacité de la foi” (“Without herself believing in the dogmas of the Church, she believes in the efficacy of faith”), Édouard writes in his journal (*Les faux-monnayeurs* 231; *Counterfeiters* 188).

33. Those are in most condensed form the ideas that Maritain developed in works such as *Antimoderne* (1922; *Antimodern*) and *Trois réformateurs* (1925; *Three Reformers*).

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Abstract: This article revisits André Gide's emblematically modernist novel, *Les faux-monnayeurs* (1925; *The Counterfeiters*), by reevaluating the importance and significance of the setting at the center of the narrative: the "pension Azaïs-Vedel," a Protestant educational institution around which all the novel's characters—mostly adolescents—gravitate and all the subplots converge. It shows how Gide's choice of setting responded to the "quarrel of classicism," which reconfigured the French literary field at the turn of the twentieth century, superimposing the political, the aesthetic, and the religious and connecting the question of literary form with that of the formation of French youth. The article also reassesses the survival of religion in twentieth-century French literature, and in particular the enduring religiosity inflecting both political modernity and modernist aesthetics.