“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said . . . , “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything; so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. “They’ve a temper, some of them—particularly verbs: they’re the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That’s what I say!”

—LEWIS CARROLL

From the perspective of Taine and the determinists, authors of parables, like compilers of laboratory reports, must believe in the replicability of the cause-effect relationship; moralists and scientists both describe a procedure and indicate the results obtained; both suppose that, under similar conditions, the same operation produces virtually identical results. According to this mechanistic outlook, our ability to learn from others’ experience depends upon our belief that similar deeds have similar consequences: causal replicability is thus a moral as well as a scientific notion.

That André Gide was aware of this dubious double role of rectilinear causality is evident in the parallel verve with which he mocks, in Les Caves du Vatican, Anthime’s early confidence in the scientific method and his later faith in papal infallibility and in the ethical doctrines of the Church. Gide’s 1914 satire stigmatizes, of course, not the principle of causation but, as he
made clear, the naïve belief in obvious, mechanistic causes and in the predictability of human behavior which lay at the base of some social sciences and of literature with ethical pretensions. Yet Gide was himself an author of moral tales, notably of *L'Immoraliste*, in which the causal chain seems to lead so directly from the beginning to the end that Pierre Laurens could offer this succinct analysis of the work shortly after its appearance in 1902: “Je suis malade, tant pis pour moi. Je suis guéri, tant pis pour elle!”3 (“I’m sick: too bad for me. I’m cured: too bad for her!”). More recent critics agree: “Marceline must ‘decrease’ so that Michel may ‘increase’”4 and “le principal personnage de *L’Immoraliste* ne pouvait recouvrer sa santé qu’au prix de celle de sa femme”5 (“*L’Immoraliste’s* main character could regain his health only at the expense of his wife’s”). How then did Gide move from the confident affirmation of causality as a didactic device in *L’Immoraliste* to ridicule by exaggeration of this “ragoût de logique” (“logical potpourri”), also for didactic purposes, in *Les Caves*? A comparison of the causal vocabulary and relationships in *L’Immoraliste* and in the companion work, *La Porte étroite* (completed 1908; published 1909), indicates the central position occupied by perceived causation in Gide’s thought, as well as his equivocal attitude toward it.

Comparisons will also shed light on the relationship of reader to narrator. Both tales are told by intradiegetic narrators; indeed each is the central figure in his own *récit*. The double reference of the narrative “je” (I who speak/I who acted)6 already marks a sharp distinction between reader and narrator, for, while we remain in direct communication with “I who speak,” we are as far removed from his acting alter ego as from any other character: “I who acted” has his actions mediated and explained by the *récit*. “I who acted” belongs to the narrative past, and his actions to the inferred author; “I who speak” is the encoder and mediator of these actions in a narrative present. Encoding involves reporting of the “raw data” of the *histoire*, in which causation appears immediate, passing directly from subject to predicate. This is the sort of ubiquitous narrative causality to which Todorov refers in his *Grammaire du Décaméron*. Mediation includes the explanations, the causal judgments passed by the narrator upon the events of the *histoire*. This expression of causality is optional and resides in the use of explicit causal vocabulary in the *récit*, overdetermining the generalized causality inherent in the recounting of any *histoire*. As both levels of expressed causation exist in both Gidean texts herein examined (as in virtually all narrative fiction), filtered through the double “je,” possibilities for
contradiction, or at least for suspicion, arise. That is to say, the reader may doubt, on the basis of the histoire, the causal explanations of the récit.

It will be a simple matter to keep the post-boc-propter-hoc fallacy in proper perspective, for the fundamental question, on the level of the récit, is not whether A caused B, but whether the narrator says or implies that it did. Causal vocabulary results from the perception, attributed to a narrator, of a causal relationship, independent of the objective existence of any causation. Indeed, studies have shown that in real life subjects frequently make erroneous assertions of causation, either because they are mistaken in their perceptions (e.g., primitive tribes who do not associate copulation and procreation), or because language itself encourages affirmations of causation even when none is perceived. Thus subjects will speak of a point of light “bumping,” “pushing aside,” or “pulling along” another point of light on a screen, even when they are aware that the laws of motion are not operable in such a situation, so that the very existence of causal vocabulary seems to call forth a causal description of events. Again, it is the transitivity of verbs, the “causal” relationship of subject to predicate associated with the histoire, that can make us express causality in spite of ourselves.

A survey of causal vocabulary from sample pages of L'Immoraliste and La Porte étroite is described in appendix A. It reveals both the remarkable ubiquitousness of causal expression in language and some fundamental specific differences in technique between Michel and Jérôme as narrators.

First, the general remarks. Any reference to causal vocabulary calls to mind the standard metalanguage: cause, to cause, because (of). But such terms are relatively rare; if we think a bit harder, we may realize that conjunctions such as for, since, and as often express causation, as do so that, so as to, etc. Adverbs of logical conclusion also come readily to mind: thus, so, and so forth. But it is with verbs that we note the tremendous expansion of the causal lexicon, for all transitive verbs that designate a modification affirm causality. In addition, there are a number of relatively common special verbs of etiological significance: to allow, to permit, and to make (plus infinitive or adjective: to make them do it; to make them happy). Causal verbs account for about half the expressed causation in our sample, and neither narrator can do much to eliminate them from his style.

But causation is also lurking in prepositions, adjectives, and present participles. Among the prepositions, one might think of by (agency) and to (motivation: she rose to speak). Yet cause can also be implied by with (overcome with joy), from (suffering from catarrh), according to (we fasted,
according to family custom), or even of (died of grief) in English, and French prepositions, quite frequent in the sample, are at least equally capable of simple, naïve, almost invisible attribution of cause. As for participles and adjectives, they commonly are substituted for because plus clause in English (she tore a tendon lifting weights; discontent with my lot, I took to gambling) and for parce que plus clause in French, as the sample reveals.

Furthermore, whether we realize it or not, we express causation in certain expressions of degree (usually based upon so . . . that: so moved was he that he began to cry) which indicate that attainment of a vague threshold was a necessary condition of a triggered effect. With similar subtlety, causal expressions can be masked as spatial (e.g., in my office, no one shouts) or temporal (when I saw him, I blanched).

Finally, while narrators can impute causes explicitly with expressions such as to blame it on or to put it down to, they can also imply them by the mere juxtaposition of two logically related events, leaving out all causal vocabulary (parataxis). At times, and (et) may link such events (e.g., he tripped and fell), but causation remains implied. A special subcategory of causal parataxis operates in all reported conversations: even though there is seldom a lexical indication that one character’s words come as the result of the preceding words or gesture of another, without a sign to the contrary it is obviously implied causality that forms the transitivity of reported dialogue.

In his analysis of Little Red Riding Hood, Gerald Prince appears ambivalent on the matter; he notes a causal connective between the mother’s command and Little Red Riding Hood’s departure, as well as between two elements of the Wolf’s dialogue with the grandmother, but his transformational rules turn up no causal relationship between the Wolf’s tap on the door and the grandmother’s “Who is there?” Nor do they reveal one between elements of the famous dialogue of the Wolf and Red Riding Hood, such as “Grandmother, you have such big teeth!” and “It’s to eat you!” Still, considering that answers presuppose questions, and that accusations, reflections, opinions (and knocks on doors) are encouragements, if not implied commands, to respond, readers are justified in finding a relationship of implication between elements of a dialogue. Since reported dialogue is, however, essentially an encoding of the histoire with little noticeable mediation by the narrator, this sort of parataxis provides implied causation coming from the inferred author, rather than from the narrator.

This rather tedious general survey has demonstrated, I hope, that
language has resources for etiological expression far beyond those usually considered, and that all of them need to be taken into account in causal analysis of récits. When we do so for L’Immoraliste and La Porte étroite, striking differences begin to appear between the texts and between the two narrators, Michel and Jérôme.

The distinction is not to be found in the transitive verbs of modification (e.g., avait aggravé in “Mon deuil n’avait pas assombri, mais comme aggravé notre amour,” [p. 515]; “My mourning had not darkened our love, but rendered it, as it were, more serious”), for language obliges both narrators to employ them, and they do so with nearly equal frequency. But when there is a choice, Michel expresses cause more frequently than Jérôme in those ways which are naïve, direct and straightforward. He selects causal faire (“to make” plus infinitive) more frequently, and causation surfaces far more often in his prepositions. This is particularly noteworthy with causal de (for which there is no consistent English equivalent; it is often translated of, with, or from), a simple and unobtrusive locution connecting effects to their causes almost as if the latter possessed the former. Since a certain effort is required to avoid use of this common connective, it is all the more significant that, in the sample for La Porte étroite, where Jérôme’s prose predominates, only eight occurrences of causal de are from his pen, while 15 come from Alissa (letters and diary) and two from Abel. Michel, in the sample from “his” novel, uses the locution 42 times; Jérôme is obviously more wary of simple causal connectives than he—more even than Alissa. Michel also uses adjectives and participles in a causal sense more frequently than Jérôme, and he chooses many more causal nouns for the straightforward naming of motivations (intention, résolution, sentiment, élan, influence, désir), physical forces, and states of being which produce an effect. He employs the obvious ritual vocabulary of logical conclusion more often as well, and, perhaps less straightforwardly, he outdoes Jérôme in implying causation through standard parataxis. In general, then, Michel’s tale is a series of events causally linked by their narrator.

But Jérôme surpasses Michel in four categories of causal expression. First, he uses a few more causal conjunctions than his counterpart (his numerical advantage here stems primarily from his more frequent use of car, which serves to introduce explanations after the fact). Then too, he predominates in his selection of more subtle causal expressions: those of degree (the vague causal “threshold”) and those which mask causation as a merely temporal relationship. These techniques express causality while
concealing it. Finally, far more conversational parataxis appears in the sample for *La Porte étroite*; the fact that Jérôme often quotes conversations verbatim underscores the importance for him of reporting (rather than interpreting) events. Jérôme-as-narrator is less a mediating presence in his tale than Michel in his, and when Jérôme does provide causal mediation he proffers it in the least apparent ways.

This comparison leads to an obvious conclusion. *L’Immoraliste* is an interpretive summary of events, mediated by Michel. It expresses causality more frequently than *La Porte étroite*, according to our sample, often choosing, when a choice exists, direct and naïve terms, as though cause and effect were elements of a single reality. *La Porte étroite* reports a series of events, but Jérôme, and to some extent Alissa as well, is less able or willing to infer causal relations among them. Here, we find a greater number of less forthright causal expressions—those especially of temporality—as if the narrator were consciously eluding the *post-hoc-propter-hoc* peril. The sample suggests that things happen more frequently across the subject-predicate relationship than in *L’Immoraliste* and that more verbatim replies are cited (conversational parataxis), so that causation subsists in the *histoire*, where it is the reader who must infer it, while fewer explanations of causality are provided on the level of the *récit*.

Michel, it must be remembered, is telling his story to intradiegetic narratees, friends to whom he has called out for help. It would seemingly be in his interest to bring them to understand his perception of the consequential nature of events in his life. Unless one believes that “one thing led to another,” Michel’s cruelty toward Marceline appears gratuitous and therefore all the more blameworthy. Furthermore, since Michel’s oral tale has been enclosed in a letter, it must have been transcribed by someone (one of the narratees?), who could have (unwittingly?) selected certain causal terms. But for whom is Jérôme writing? For the general public? If he, like Michel, feels some guilt about the outcome, it would be important that the causes of that result remain hidden. Michel says, in essence, “Understand the causes of my reprehensible acts”; Jérôme might well be saying, “I caused nothing and am therefore not reprehensible.” The relationship between narrator and narratee is thus in part defined by the use of causal vocabulary.

The subtle reduction in the special terminology of causal expression in *La Porte étroite* is often combined with the clustering of explanations around a particular event, so that the reader may know all the immediate causes of
an action, as the narrator sees them, without being able to connect it to any other important action or to a causal chain. The result is a partial loss of transitivity in the 1909 work, with a corresponding increase in Barthes’s scriptible. At least three readings of the histoire of La Porte étroite seem pertinent to the data, and, with some exaggeration, may be summarized in this manner: (1) Alissa’s puritanical, ascetic tendencies gradually destroy all hope of the earthly happiness which Jérôme seeks to offer her with his love; (2) Jérôme—insensitive if not secretly sadistic—drives Alissa to her death by offering physical love on the one hand while constantly suggesting, on the other, that for Alissa to accept it would be a betrayal of religious principle and a debasement of herself; (3) both Jérôme and Alissa entertain a Cornelian notion of honor or merit and institute if not a sadistic at least a “Cidistic” rivalry between them to determine which can become the more worthy of the other by exhibiting a greater capacity to sacrifice their earthly relationship, a little game Alissa wins hands down—by dying. The existence of a plurality of readings would seem to leave us without a positive ethical clue: if, as Gide suggested, this is an ironical and critical work like L’Immoraliste, what sort of conduct is criticized?

The fact that Gide stressed the similarity of these two texts, even calling them “twin” works, that he seems to have taken pains to construct them in parallel, invites a structuralist reading: perhaps if taken together the works affirm something they cannot declare singly. If the timelines of the two récits are juxtaposed, the principal common features become apparent, revealing in their very similarity the nature of the essential differences. Each narrator chooses his father’s death as a starting point; each presents three crises capable of influencing the course of his life; and each provides a thrice-repeated testing event, three similar occurrences which allow us to judge the progress of the changes taking place in the characters. In both stories, these features occur in the same order (father’s death, first crisis, first test, second crisis, second test, third test, third crisis), and with nearly equivalent spacing along both timelines. Comparison and contrast of these features reveal the role of causal links in determining the function of specific narrative sequences.

In Michel’s story, the narrator marks causal connections between major events. For this reason, his father’s death constitutes a true beginning: obedience to his father’s deathbed wish leads him to marry Marceline and thus gives rise to the central moral question of the tale; an inheritance from his father brings Michel La Morinière and other possessions, which
will serve as touchstones to his attitude toward property and liberty throughout the story. On the other hand, although Jérôme indicates three times that his histoire begins with his father's demise (pp. 495, 497), this death has little direct bearing on subsequent events. Jérôme appears to suggest two reasons for seeing it as a beginning. First, he alludes to his new awareness, at this date, that he and Alissa were no longer children, with a hint that "perhaps" the sight of his mother's grief might have precociously awakened his sexuality. Here, we may either score one point for those who see in Jérôme a sadist, or we may question the explanation on grounds of our own experience, on the belief for example that biological processes and not periods of mourning determine the onset of puberty. The use of the dubitative "peut-être" ("perhaps"), not unusual in Jérôme's style, undermines the assertion of causation and encourages our questioning. In the second place, Jérôme points to his father's death as a beginning because it allows Lucile to demonstrate her character by failing to remain in mourning, yet this is an obvious artifice: Lucile will show far greater resources for illustrating her individuality. Thus, Jérôme's explanations—ever so cautiously expressed and patently incomplete—begin to subvert our confidence in the causal bond between events; while the death of Michel's father starts a true chain reaction, Jérôme's loss remains a vaguely associated early memory without recognizable consequences.

Both histoires show further similarity in the presentation of three crises. The first appears to determine the basic direction of the tales, since both narrators make "resolutions" about the course of their conduct immediately thereafter. The second seems to be a turning point, occurring near the midpoint of the texts and marked as similar by the proximity of Christmas in both narratives. The third is ostensibly the tragic outcome: a woman's death. But if these crises are indeed what they seem in L'Immoraliste, they are something quite different in La Porte étroite, because of breaks in the causal chain of the récit.

Michel's initial crisis is carefully prepared: his weak constitution—further enfeebled by precocious adoption of a sedentary life, debilitated again by mourning for his father, the excitement of a wedding, and the fatigue of the honeymoon trip, and finally assailed by the chill of the African night—is an obvious receptacle for that "initial stative event" which is the presence of the bacillus in his lungs. On the verge of death, Michel faces his first crucial moment, and the results are stated as explicitly as the causes: on the one hand, desire to get well leads to self-discipline in
diet and exercise, tending to fortify the body, while on the other, preoccupation with his own corporality brings Michel to discover the "old man" within him.

But such precise causes and effects do not surround Lucile Bucolin's flight, the initial crisis evoked by Jérôme. We are not even told why Lucile leaves hearth and home. Jérôme's portrayal of her as evilly sensual depends in part on our acceptance of the righteousness of his point of view. When, for example, she tickled him under his blouse, to his great embarrassment, was she wantonly arousing an adolescent, or did she believe she was playing with a cute little boy in a sailor suit? The narrator's vagueness about dates makes it difficult to guess. She received a lieutenant in her room, without her husband's knowledge according to Alissa, but still in the presence of her two younger children, a procedure seldom recommended for those seeking to preserve secrecy. She suffered from apparently neurotic "crises," which Jérôme's mother believed to be feigned (p. 501), although the reason for play-acting is difficult to discover; they are hardly a "cover" for a love affair, since they seem to require the presence of her husband, not his absence. Perhaps they (and even the lieutenant's playful visits) are intended to break what might have been for her the monotony of her Bucolin existence, although objective certainty is impossible. That she eventually leaves home is, of course, a fictional reality, but the reasons are surprisingly obscure. When Jérôme asks if she had left "with someone," Miss Ashburton replies: "Mon enfant, tu demanderas cela à ta mère; moi je ne peux rien te répondre" (p. 504); "Ask your mother, child; I can't give you any answer." The first clause smacks of the traditional evasion for a child, but the second is ambiguous: indeed it does seem unlikely that she could provide information on this subject on the mere basis of the telegram from Le Havre. Since Jérôme makes it a point never to ask his mother, we cannot know. Departure with a lover is plausible, but so is flight to escape the insidious boredom of Le Havre and Fongueusemare, or even to avoid recrimination, now that the secret is out (p. 504) of the possibly unadulterous but surely suspicious rendezvous. Considering the ease with which we could have been informed of Lucile's purposes and ultimate fate—two or three well-placed words would have left no doubts—one begins to suspect that there is conscious suppression of causal connectives. Scarcely clearer is the effect of the desertion on the protagonists, for Jérôme seldom mentions Lucile in what follows. Alissa appears conscious of her father's suffering, and she seems to fear that her own nature is contaminated with her mother's sen-
suality (pp. 585–86). Still, causation is not explicit. Nor is it suggested (indeed there is a hint to the contrary) that such a fear would of itself suffice to make Alissa refuse Jérôme’s repeated proposal of marriage.

These crises lead directly, in both works, to the formulation of resolutions by the narrators. Michel declares, “I had made resolutions” (p. 384, “j'avais pris des résolutions”), and we are told precisely what they are: deep breathing, exercise, proper diet. After the account of the “strait gate” sermon, Jérôme too uses the word “résolutions,” surrounded by a cluster of causal vocabulary of extraordinary density:

J'étais parvenu vers la fin du sermon à un tel état de tension morale que, sitôt le culte fini, je m’enfuis sans chercher à voir ma cousine—par fierté, voulant déjà mettre mes résolutions (car j’en avais pris) à l’épreuve, et pensant la mieux mériter en m’éloignant d’elle [aus]-sitôt. (P. 506)

(I had reached such a state of moral tension toward the end of the sermon that, as soon as the service was over, I fled without seeking to see my cousin—out of pride, already desirous of putting my resolutions [for I had made some] to the test, and believing I became more worthy of her by distancing myself from her at once.)

Seldom have so many reasons explained so little. The parenthetical “car,” for example, calls our attention to the resolutions, but gives such a literal-minded cause as to be virtually redundant. All the causes alleged (threshold of moral tension, resolutions, pride, desire for a test of strength, belief that immediate separation is a means to worthiness) tend to explain the individual act of leaving the church without a word to Alissa, but they leave us in the dark as to the nature of the continuing resolutions. We are thus impelled to determine the nature of these vows inductively; we may note perhaps that long separations characterize the relationship of these lovers, and that poor verbal communication is typical of their moments together. We may suppose as a result that Jérôme has resolved to deserve Alissa more by communicating with her less. Whether such a reading is accurate or not, the essential notion is that we must read La Porte étroite inductively on this question, while we can follow Michel’s conduct deductively, watching his theory become its application. Michel provides satisfactory explanations of direct causation, while causes are so diffuse in Jérôme’s récit as to drive the reader to attempt his own causal analysis of the histoire. Jérôme’s clustered causal vocabulary, “explaining” the immediate at the expense of the long
term, subverts our belief in his perception and reporting of the causal relationship: where causal terms abound and yet provide no answers to the fundamental questions, we can entertain doubts about their worth.

Further on, both works evoke a Christmastime crisis. Marceline loses her baby, with phlebitic complications leading to cardiac and pulmonary embolisms (pp. 437–39). This major turn of events is carefully prepared, with credible medical data linking each illness to the preceding one. The source of the initial fever is unexplained, like the source of Michel's tuberculosis; the prescription of quinine for it might suggest a late-appearing malaria, perhaps contracted in North Africa, an interesting idea symbolically, but quite inductive. Still, from the fever on, the causal chain is clearly marked, as Marceline becomes, for her husband, “une chose abîmée”—“damaged goods.” In *La Porte étroite*, Juliette’s traumatic engagement to Teissières, beside Aunt Plantier’s Christmas tree, is well explained in terms of immediate causes (Abel adduces them for us, pp. 537, 539), but major questions remain. Has Jérôme, knowingly or unwittingly, encouraged Juliette’s love for him? Why does he make no attempt to prevent the engagement when Alissa begs him to, even though he says he would have “given his life” to ease Alissa’s anguish at this moment? Even if, to explain such things, we attribute to Jérôme a blind and bungling nature, there is no easy way to connect this incident to what follows. Its consequences seem to melt away; Juliette’s sacrificial marriage becomes a normal and rather happy one; Alissa, freed at last to marry Jérôme, continues to refuse just as before, so that the story of Juliette appears as an episode, with roots and branches barely touching the central, Jérôme-Alissa relationship. Connections may be induced (did Juliette’s capacity for self-sacrifice spur Alissa on to greater abnegation?), but the explicit causal links, of the sort we find in *L’Immoraliste*, are absent.17

The same contrast is apparent in the death that ends each story. The succession of carefully interconnected maladies that weaken Marceline, and Michel’s all too well-considered conduct that brings her to her grave, are clearly set forth in Michel’s narrative, with more than sufficient causal vocabulary to justify the word “crime” (p. 471). The cause of Alissa’s death, however, must be inferred, and the wealth of evidence provided makes inference difficult rather than easy. We have Jérôme’s declaration that, when he last saw her, less than a month before her death, she was alarmingly pale and thin (p. 579). We have Juliette’s opinion that Alissa, without being precisely ill, was simply dying away. We have medical opinion, from
Dr. A... in Le Havre, that there was nothing seriously wrong with her, and, from Alissa's Parisian doctor, that she needed an operation (p. 593). We also have Alissa's conduct (flight to Paris carefully incognito, unwillingness to see the doctor there, ruse to delay the operation) and her symptoms (consciousness that death was near, vomiting, weakness). Is this death from a broken heart? Novels evoking such things seldom list vomiting as a symptom, and operations are rarely prescribed. Can it be death from self-abnegation, including perhaps starvation? That might not be inconsistent with Alissa's secretive flight from Le Havre, where she was known, but the prescribed operation scarcely fits that diagnosis. Why not cancer? That disease fits all our information rather well, except for poor Dr. A...'s opinion. If we allow ourselves some skepticism about provincial doctors of the period, cancer, with Alissa seeking to avoid treatment and thus collaborating (for reasons of self-abnegation, or out of despair?) in her own death, fits everything, except her age—and the rest of the book. If Alissa is one of those rare individuals to be stricken with cancer in their early twenties, at a time when cancer was virtually incurable, it makes little sense, whether she avoids treatment or not, to suggest she died of excessive asceticism, or that Jérôme killed her. Her death, if from cancer, is simply absurd, without direct causal connection to any other element of the work. The narrator of Le Rouge et le noir states no cause for Madame de Rénal's death either, at the close of his récit, but readers can readily intuit one from the histoire. Where inductive analysis of the histoire leads to nothing but further disconnections, we are clearly in a different sort of fictional world.

Finally, in both Gidean tales, the narrator provides a repeated event (the first occurrence falling before the Christmas crisis) which serves as a test of progression, much as a chemist might test the progress of a complex chemical reaction at intermediate stages, to ascertain whether the expected transformations are taking place. In L'Immoraliste, the tests are purely anecdotal and as much exterior to the causal chain as litmus paper is to a chemical solution. Three times (pp. 404, 445, 462) unruly drivers appear, testing the progress of Michel's growing "immoralism" by the protagonist's reaction to them (first: violent rage; second: curiosity; third: complicity). The test for progress in La Porte étroite is Jérôme's repeated proposal of marriage to Alissa, which recurs in the timeline with a rhythm analogous to Michel's unruly drivers (pp. 521, 563, 578). No anecdote this, for Jérôme is asking a question that has become uppermost in readers' minds. With the weakening of the linear causal chain, repetition, rather
than causality, begins to carry the narrative. Reversal, of course, does not occur: Alissa's answer is always "no." Jérôme makes no progress toward the altar, if indeed that was where he sought to go.

The presence in the narrative of Alissa's point of view can give us few additional certainties. One can scarcely imagine a less rectilinear mode for the presentation of her version of events than the few selected letters we are allowed to read, than the fragmentary entries of her partially destroyed journal—and she is nearly as cautious as Jérôme with causal terms. Indeed, in this ill-joined world, there would be some impertinence in asking why Lucile flees, or from what Alissa dies, in invoking thus expectations which are exterior to the story, were it not for L'Immoraliste, which, between analogous structural building blocks, supplies the mortar and fulfills the expectations. Comparative reading shows a weakening of causal connections from L'Immoraliste to La Porte étroite, with resultant opening of the second work to multiple interpretations and a corresponding reduction of useful didactic content.

At the very heart of his tale, Michel provides us with a paradigm of it, in his summary of his first Parisian lecture (p. 424). Replete with causal connectives, this passage explains how Culture, a spontaneous product of human life, in order to perpetuate itself becomes restrictive and thus destructive of life. Likewise, Michel's personal liberation—rising spontaneously from his instinctive being—when it is transformed into a course of conduct with rules necessary to keep it intact, becomes destructive of life and of the vital nature from which it springs: "l'ardu, c'est savoir être libre," (p. 372); "the hard part is managing to live free." The implication is that, if anyone seeks liberty, as Michel does, it will be impossible to maintain it, for the price of maintenance is loss of liberty. The possibility of such a paradigm and of its moral implications rests firmly on the underlying causal links. As Michel's lecture was didactic, so is his tale.

Obviously, one might suggest as well that Alissa's perseverance in pursuit of virtue contains in similar fashion the seeds of its own destruction, for the quest for moral perfection removes us unvirtuously ever farther from our ordinary fellow mortals. Thus perseverance in a single direction might be the moral evil denounced in both stories. Yet, in La Porte étroite, perseverance loses its essential aspect: continuity. Is it pursuit of virtue, flight from sensuality, a contest with Jérôme, or now one, now another? The second work seems, in its mode of narration, to sacrifice didactic certainty to the beauty and interest of a less predictable world. Because of this very
unpredictability, Jérôme and Alissa appear somehow sadly freer to be themselves, to evade responsibility for each other's earthly happiness. Certainly the didactic and critical sense of the two works taken together includes the notion that real freedom, unfortunately, springs less from the rebellious gesture than from one's outlook, from a world view in which events have no simple, deterministic, causal relationships. And herein lies the irony of our two texts: it is *L'Immoraliste* that provides the strait gate, through which readers must pass in the single file of general exegetic agreement, while *La Porte étroite* opens the spacious road of multiple interpretations. Indeed, as the paucity of replicable causation tends to destroy its potential for moral instruction, the 1909 work becomes the truly "immoralistic" one.

Causal expression, in its presence or its absence, is the basic metonymic structure of these stories, as of nearly all narrative fiction, essential not only to the intelligence of the themes, but also to the reader's manipulation of the story. The optional expression of causation sets the narrator apart from the inferred author. It is a touchstone by which the reader determines the narrator's credibility—a trait far more important than narrator "personality" (neither Michel nor Jérôme is especially likable or admirable) in establishing the reader's involvement with the narrator. It provides a system of links and gaps, which readers use in the mental (re)creation of the narrative. The links may be plausible or implausible, strong (providing desired explanation) or weak (offering unneeded or useless explanations). When weak links are numerous, readers may suspect the narrator of subverting causality to his own ends, of creating a "cover up." Gaps in the causal chain send readers back to the inferred author, to seek to infer causes for themselves from the basic "facts" of the *histoire*, just as unsatisfactory links do. In either case, the reader will try to fill the gaps or strengthen the links, creating as she or he does so a personal mental récit, in competition with that of the narrator. As biological cells have exterior receptors for bonding with other organisms, so the gaps in the chain of causality bond the reader to the tale.21

One might suspect as well that causality and its expression could change from decade to decade, that causal analysis might yield diachronic results of interest. Gide seems to be balancing on a tightrope between a world of clear causes and effects and a more modern, more absurd, world, in which credible explanations are harder to come by. On the one hand he gives us the causally plausible *Immoraliste*, and much later the equally direct causality of *Thésée* (1944); on the other, with *La Porte étroite*, we find the
ambiguous Faux-monnayeurs, and the all too explicit Caves du Vatican, where simplistic causality is ironically reinstated, only to self destruct. A look backward to a simpler time of more naïve faith in causation, before Nietzsche's message had begun to sink in, may illuminate the pre-Gidean world and provide contrast with the post-Gidean outlook. We return, then, to the "scientific" causation of Emile Zola (to which the word " naïve" is not always applicable!), before observing more recent texts.

Notes

This chapter is a revised version of an article of mine which appeared under the title "Gidean Causality: L'Immoraliste and La Porte étroite," in Symposium, 31, 1 (Spring 1977), 43-58. Reprinted with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Published by Heldref Publications, 4000 Albemarle St., N. W., Washington, D.C. 20016. Copyright © 1977.

1. See the Introduction, above.


10. On clustering, see Prince, pp. 48–49.


16. The lieutenant is absent from the more autobiographical version of the same scene in *Si le grain ne meurt . . .* : André Gide, *Oeuvres complètes*, 10 (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), 162–63.

17. Gide seems to be aware of it, for he explained to Claudel that he indeed wished Alissa's drama to unfold without exterior constraints, but that Lucile's "fault" and the Juliette plot were necessary to provide some humanizing motivation: *Correspondance*, p. 104.

18. Although my conclusions are based solely on the text, it is possible that Gide drew Alissa's solitary death from his experience with Anna Shackleton's, following her tumor operation: see Gide, *Oeuvres complètes*, 10, 278.

19. Davies, p. 34, notes the testing function, but cites only the first and third occurrences. See also Henri Maillot, *L'Immoraliste d'André Gide* (Paris: Hachette, 1972), pp. 43–47.

20. Gide uses similar metaphors (*Journal*, pp. 276, 387) in reference to Jérôme's prose, which he calls the *mastic* or *rejointement* for the passages by Alissa. He finds this mortar limp ("flasque") and not without *préciosité*.
