

Forgetting Gide: A Study of Barthes's 'Ursuppe'

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In 1975, Roland Barthes described André Gide as '[his] original language, [his] *Ursuppe*, [his] literary soup'.¹ This metaphor of a primordial soup offers a useful approach to Barthes's strange and crucially important relation to Gide, which is not explained satisfactorily as an 'anxiety of influence', nor as a spectre or an Oedipal slaying of a powerful precursor, nor as any straightforward form of imitation or identification.² Critics have recognised that Barthes had more than a passing interest in Gide: Susan Sontag finds a symmetry in Barthes's early and late interest in the Gidean *Journal*, which confers a 'retrospective completeness' on his career, and James Williams argues that in the posthumously published diary *Soirées de Paris* Barthes managed to 'resolve [...] an anxiety of Gidean influence'.³ Lawrence Schehr has demonstrated the 'obligatory intertext' between Barthes's and Gide's writing on homosexuality, and Tiphaine Samoyault has explored the multiple points of contact between the two authors, including their shared Protestantism and piano playing.⁴ Yet I shall argue that Barthes's Gidean 'Ursuppe' – of constitutive importance for his project as a writer but also at odds with much of his theoretical work – can best be understood by examining the way in which Gide is excluded from Barthes's work, in an active process of forgetting. Barthes's attitude towards Gide forms an alternating pattern, in which Gide is first prominently evoked and admired, then subsequently suppressed, and this pattern can be mapped very approximately across four stages of Barthes's career, as follows:

- Barthes's early attachment to Gide was manifested in his first published article, his 1942 text 'On Gide and his *Journal*';⁵
- from the late 1940s until the early 1970s, Gide was almost absent from Barthes's writing, being only rarely referred to in passing;
- Gide returned emphatically to Barthes's work in 1975, most notably in the autobiographical work *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (containing the assertion of Gide's role as 'Ursuppe');

- yet Gide was limited to a very minor role in Barthes's broad project for a 'Vita Nova' in the final years of his life, which is all the more surprising as the project is motivated by a characteristically Gidean desire to 'unify a life of writing', and more practically, to use the form of the *journal intime* to produce a literary *œuvre*.⁶

Why, then, is Gide actively suppressed over long periods of Barthes's career, rather than merely being ignored? It is consistent with the metaphor of 'Ursuppe', a primordial soup and more particularly a 'literary soup', that Gide is intimately connected to Barthes's very nature as a writer, but also that these first biological building blocks might not be manifest in all that he does, or all that he becomes. This intimate connection also makes it impossible for Barthes to write about Gide without implicating himself, whereas it involves less personal risk to engage with his other favoured writers. A comparison with Barthes's relation to Proust is particularly revealing: as Barthes commented in an interview in 1980, over many years he did not work extensively on the authors that were prominent between the two World Wars (Gide, Proust, Valéry), yet Proust was frequently mentioned in passing throughout Barthes's whole career.⁷ From 1966 Barthes began to use George Painter's biography of Proust to explore questions pertaining to a literary critic's use of an author's life,⁸ and from 1978 Barthes claimed to identify with Proust at the point when he undertook the composition of *In Search of Lost Time*.⁹ If this obscures the presence of Gide, it is partly because Barthes was able to engage more freely with Proust as an author who was neither instrumental in his literary beginnings, nor directly relevant to the overall problem of Barthes's nature as a writer – not the Proustian implication of a life and a single, monolithic novel, but the Gidean desire to 'pass from a contingent plurality of published texts to the transcendental Unity of the *œuvre*'.¹⁰ This is not to dispute the importance of Proust in Barthes's work, but rather to emphasise that Gide's role as Barthes's 'Ursuppe' was unique.

I shall outline the development of this relationship over the four stages of Barthes's career already mentioned. A fairly rapid account of the first three stages will make way for a more detailed examination of Barthes's pursuit of a 'Vita Nova' from approximately 1977, a period in which Barthes's deep ambivalence towards Gide and the *journal intime* reveals a great deal about his reflection on his own role and practice as a writer. The present study will conclude at the point when, in the midst of the 'Vita Nova' project, Barthes undertook his own literary work of

diary-writing, which was to be published posthumously under the title *Soirées de Paris*.¹¹ It will become apparent that this point marks both an end and a beginning to Barthes's relationship with Gide; both a resolution to Barthes's equivocation about his role as writer, and the start of a writing project that forms a response to Gide's *Journal*.¹²

1942: 'Notes sur André Gide et son *Journal*'

It is easy to forget that, at the beginning of Barthes's career, Gide was a living, publishing author, whom Barthes could describe in 1944 as a 'great modern writer'.¹³ Although Gide had not published major works of fiction since the 1920s, he had remained at the centre of intellectual and literary life in France, and he once again provoked a storm of publicity in 1939 with the publication of his *Journal 1889–1939*, a work often seen as his masterpiece and the keystone of a literary *œuvre* that is centred around an extremely complex author-figure.¹⁴ Far from a work of juvenile infatuation, Barthes's 1942 article 'On Gide and his *Journal*' is both an insightful engagement with a recent literary text, and an aspiring writer's strategic attempt to situate himself in a lineage that stretches back via Gide to Montaigne. Barthes establishes his own relation to literary history by analogy with Gide's critical writing:

I don't know if we have accorded enough importance to Gide's Goethean aspect; the same is also true of his affinities with Montaigne (Gide's predilections indicate not an influence but an identity); it is never without a reason that Gide writes a critical work. His preface to selections from Montaigne, indeed his very choice of texts, tells us as much about Gide as about Montaigne.¹⁵

Gide's attachment to Goethe and Montaigne recurs throughout his career, but Barthes here alludes more specifically to Gide's publication in 1939 of *Les Pages immortelles de Montaigne*.¹⁶ In this collection of excerpts and commentary, all of Gide's discussion of Montaigne's *Essays* seems equally relevant to the almost simultaneous publication of his own *Journal*, such as his comment that, 'in this unique work, written without a pre-established order, without method, following the contingency of events and readings, he claims to give himself over to us in his entirety'.¹⁷ Similarly, Barthes inscribes himself in this sequence in which '[the] past is renewed upon contact with a present intelligence', and whereby the newer author identifies with particular traits that are adopted from the previous generation.¹⁸

Given this particular critical stance, what do Barthes's comments on Gide's *Journal* tell us about his own literary projects? Some of his points appear incompatible with the later development of his career, notably the humanism implicit in his claim that Gide and Montaigne represent 'man par excellence', and his emphasis on a Protestant history of introspection, both of which conflict with Barthes's later interest in existentialism and then structuralism.¹⁹ This suggests that Barthes's later 'forgetting' of Gide was due to his rejection of values that had become unacceptable on theoretical grounds. The same might seem to be true of the dominant question treated in the article, that of the relation between the author and the literary *œuvre*, but in fact this discussion leads in an unexpected direction, far removed from the stereotype that was to appear several years later. The author-figure is treated as a complex, often contradictory phenomenon, implicating the 'man', a 'personality', a public 'image', and also a concept of the author as constituting a literary 'œuvre'.²⁰ The *œuvre* itself takes on several forms, but it is also claimed that the *Journal* evokes a future, utopian form of *œuvre* that would transcend the issue of 'sincerity' in Gide's writing:

There are sentences which are halfway between confession and creation; they require only to be inserted into a novel and are already less sincere (or rather: their sincerity counts less than something else, which is the pleasure we take to read them). [...] [M]any entries in Gide's *Journal* [...] are no longer completely Gide; they begin to be outside him, en route for some unspecified work in which they want to appear, which they summon into being.²¹

Barthes's article situates him as the one who understands and will even pursue this aspect of Gide's work, which he does in this first instance by imitating, in fragmentary note form, the 'lack of continuity' and 'incoherence' of the *Journal*.²² There is no question that Barthes's interests and writing projects changed considerably in the years following the publication of this text, but there is also nothing in it that fully explains the subsequent exclusion of Gide from Barthes's work. By way of comparison, Maurice Blanchot continued to discuss Gide's diary-writing well into the 1950s as a way of exploring an impersonal concept of literature, and it is entirely possible to imagine a different, counterfactual development of Barthes's career, in which he would have developed from this early position while continuing to speak of Gide and his *Journal*.²³

Late 1940s to Early 1970s

The longest absence of Gide from Barthes's writing, from the late 1940s until the early 1970s, begins with a brief period of transition. In texts dating from 1947 up to 1953, subsequently incorporated in *Writing Degree Zero*, Gide is relegated to an outdated generation of writers characterised by a 'craftsmanship of style', an image of the author sculpting a literary work out of the grammar of the classical French language, which is opposed to younger writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Jean Cayrol.²⁴ Yet Gide does not continue in this role as a point of comparison for the successive avant-garde authors espoused by Barthes, as he soon undergoes a more ignominious fate. The short 1954 article 'The Writer on Holiday', later included in the full collection of *Mythologies*, examines the bourgeois myth of the author with reference to the depiction of Gide in *Le Figaro*:²⁵

Gide was reading Bossuet while going down the Congo. This posture sums up rather well the ideal of our writers 'on holiday', as photographed by *Le Figaro*: to add to banal leisure the prestige of a vocation which nothing can stop or degrade. Here is therefore a good piece of journalism, highly efficient sociologically, and which gives us, without cheating, information on the idea which our bourgeoisie entertains about its writers.²⁶

The myth functions like a hagiography, through the apparent contradiction between the banal participation of the author in the material and social world, and the prestigious or sacred status granted to them by the bourgeoisie, on the condition that they remain 'harmless'.²⁷ While this is manifestly at odds with the great subtlety of the author-figure in his *œuvre*, Gide is nonetheless vulnerable to appropriation as a straw man for the growing anti-authorial sentiment at this time, and from this point on he is tainted by association with the bourgeois myth of the author.

There is little to say about Barthes's very few, and minor, references to Gide over the rest of this period. However, we can learn much about Barthes's suppression of Gide from a text which, with some difficulty, avoids the slightest mention of him. In 1966 Barthes published an article warmly commending Alain Girard's 1963 critical work *Le Journal intime*.²⁸ Barthes focuses on the paradox of the *journal intime* as a form that rejects the conventional codes of the literary *œuvre*, and yet has become a literary genre precisely because it questions the very nature of

literature.²⁹ All the while, he avoids any reference to the fact that Girard's historical account concludes with Gide's *Journal* as 'the most significant and complete example of the transformation of the *journal intime* into a literary genre'.³⁰ But as well as suppressing any mention of Gide, Barthes maintains an ambivalent attitude towards the *journal intime* itself. He is aligned with a literary avant-garde that now 'takes for granted the truth of the experiences of depersonalisation', and so rejects the psychological introspection of the *journal intime*, yet he also considers that the current avant-garde has developed from the *journal intime* by surpassing the problem of sincerity and reflecting on writing itself.³¹ If this development sounds familiar, it is because the avant-garde in general now seems to have followed the path evoked by Barthes in 'On Gide and his *Journal*' towards a utopian *œuvre* that transcends sincerity and the author him- or herself. This article is not the moment of a return of Gide, nor even of the *journal intime*, in Barthes's work, but rather it demonstrates that, in the midst of the structuralist adventure, these interests never fully went away.

Early 1970s and *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*

Another period of transition begins in 1970, and from this point on Barthes sporadically acknowledges Gide as one of his early influences, although still considered as outdated, a 'great name', one of the 'classics'.³² Barthes's seminar in 1973 and 1974 on *Le Lexique de l'auteur* engages at greater length with Gide's *Journal* as a way of elaborating a multiple, or divided autobiographical subject.³³ But the greatest transformation in Barthes's attitude occurs in 1975 with the publication of *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (hereafter *RB by RB*), and an accompanying dossier published in a special issue of the *Magazine littéraire*. The abundant discussion of Gide at this time is presented explicitly as the return of an early influence on Barthes's work, and the *Magazine littéraire* even reprinted 'On Gide and his *Journal*' from 1942, with the caveat that Barthes now considers this work 'thoroughly outdated'.³⁴ When it comes to explaining the return of this influence, a surprisingly broad range of reasons are put forward:

- The *Journal* supposedly relates to the thematic of *RB by RB* owing to its 'devious authenticity, which is no longer authenticity';³⁵

- the diary form of the *Journal* is presented as the origin of Barthes's fragmentary or short forms of writing here and elsewhere in his career;³⁶
- Gide is repeatedly invoked in a discussion of the literary 'leadership' that he exercised for many years, as if Barthes were considering his own role in contemporary intellectual culture;³⁷
- and Gide is also simply promoted as the author of 'a great modern book', his 1895 work *Paludes* (although this happens to be the first mention of this work in Barthes's *Œuvres complètes*).³⁸

There may be some truth in each of these claims, but we should also be aware of the irony, and indeed misrepresentation, in the way that Barthes's return to Gide is depicted. The first mention of Gide in *RB by RB*, in the fragment entitled 'the writer as phantasy', sets the tone for all further discussion of this influence:

Surely there is no longer a single adolescent who has this phantasy: *to be a writer!* Imagine wanting to copy not the *œuvre* but the practices of any contemporary – his way of strolling through the world, a notebook in his pocket and a phrase in his head (the way I imagined Gide travelling from Russia to the Congo, reading his classics and writing his notebooks in the dining car, waiting for the meals to be served; the way I actually saw him, one day in 1939, in the gloom of the Brasserie Lutétia, eating a pear and reading a book)! For what the phantasy imposes is the writer as we can see him in his *journal intime*, *the writer minus his œuvre*: supreme form of the sacred: the mark and the void.³⁹

Barthes not only reproduces the very image from the 1954 text 'The Writer on Holiday' that casts him as a bourgeois author-figure (Gide reading while sailing down the Congo River), but he even reinforces this with his own recollection. The anecdote of Gide reading while eating a pear functions in precisely the same way as the original myth, combining the author's sacred, inalienable role with the banality of material existence. The diary itself is implicated in this hagiography of the author, and Barthes later repeats his claim that the *journal intime* is by now 'discredited'.⁴⁰ It is implied that Barthes's younger self was seduced by the naïve, adolescent phantasy of this myth (despite the fact that he was twenty-six years old when he wrote 'On Gide and his *Journal*'), and in fact very little is done to recuperate this 'first posture' now that Barthes has apparently returned to it. The pervasive irony of *RB by RB* as a whole

makes it difficult to arrive at any firm conclusions, but Gide's role in this text is above all a means for Barthes to play at and criticise an authorial, autobiographical posture. This does not mean that the return of Gide at this time is merely for show, and there may be some truth in Barthes's suspicion that his work contains 'a clandestine and stubborn effort to bring to light again, someday, quite freely, the theme of the Gidean "journal"'.⁴¹ But paradoxically, it is in the following period of Barthes's career, in which Gide appears to be actively suppressed once again, that we see the most substantive return to the themes and problems of Barthes's initial interest in Gide's *Journal*.

Late 1970s and 'Vita Nova'

Barthes's second 'forgetting' of Gide did not, as in the 1950s and '60s, involve maintaining a silence on the subject. Indeed, Gide is cited in the 1977 *A Lover's Discourse* and in every one of the courses at the Collège de France, although not principally in relation to Gide's literary project in the *Journal*.⁴² Yet Gide begins to be suppressed, denigrated, and strategically overlooked, at the very point when Barthes's initially vague announcement of a 'Vita Nova' becomes a project centred on the essentially Gidean desire to integrate the notation of everyday life in the construction of a utopian literary *œuvre*. Much has now been written on the development of Barthes's work over this period, but it will nonetheless be useful to outline the overall shape of the 'Vita Nova' project as the context for Barthes's last, and most problematic, engagement with Gide:⁴³

- Barthes first announced his desire for a 'Vita Nova' in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in January 1977. At this stage, the new life called for a new approach to his teaching, allowing his courses to be guided by a 'phantasy'.⁴⁴
- Two subsequent experiences in Barthes's life gave a new urgency and direction to the 'Vita Nova': his intense mourning following the death of his mother, and a 'satori' or epiphany in April 1978, in which he resolved to 'enter into literature, into writing [...] such that [...] each moment of [his] life would henceforth be work integrated into the Grand Project'.⁴⁵
- In the light of these experiences, the lecture entitled 'Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure...' in October 1978 announced the particular phantasy that would guide the course, and indeed the whole 'Grand Project' of the 'Vita Nova': the

desire for a utopian *Roman* (a novel, although the term takes on a much broader meaning than this) that might express 'the truth of affects' and memorialise Barthes's love for his deceased mother.⁴⁶ To this end, the process of writing a novel would be simulated in the course on *The Preparation of the Novel*, from the notation of the author's present, lived experience up to the composition of the imagined *Roman*.⁴⁷

- The course can therefore be seen as the centre of the 'Grand Project' of the 'Vita Nova', which can in turn be related to all the texts that Barthes produced at this time, including *Camera Lucida*, the diary of *Soirées de Paris*, and the eight pages of plans for the structure of a novel entitled *Vita Nova*.

It will be clear from this summary that the 'Vita Nova' came to address substantially the same questions that Barthes had explored in 'On Gide and his *Journal*', including the way in which a life can be integrated with writing and literature, and how the fragmentary notation of present experience can be transformed into a literary *œuvre*. While the goal of a *Roman* remained utopian and 'probably impossible',⁴⁸ diary-writing was the one sphere in which Barthes actually undertook practical projects that could constitute at least a part of this *Roman*, as the plans for the imagined work entitled *Vita Nova* refer to both the *Mourning Diary* and *Soirées de Paris* as components within its complex structure.⁴⁹ As mentioned earlier, these unusual diaries are beyond the scope of the present study, and I shall limit myself now to tracing the equivocal and largely suppressed place of Gide up to the point of undertaking these diary-writing projects.

In the broadest terms, Gide is excluded from the project to which he is central, precisely because the project does not pursue the centre, but rather the extremes, or the two 'vanishing point[s]' of Barthes's perspective:⁵⁰ Barthes remarks at the beginning of *The Preparation of the Novel* that he could examine the problems of notation by studying 'a novelist's notebooks or a biographical diary' (and the obvious choices here would be Gide's *Journal* and moreover his *Journal of The Counterfeiters*, in which he explores the problem of transferring real-life material from his diary into the novel, *The Counterfeiters*), but instead, the whole of the first part of the course is devoted to the form that Barthes considers to be 'as it were the very essence of Notation: the haiku'.⁵¹ The second part of the course is directed towards the other extreme, the project's end-point in the '*Roman* (phantasised and probably impossible)',⁵² and although this *Roman* successively takes on

different forms, it is primarily conceived as being 'long', 'continuous', 'nappé' (smooth), and is associated with Tolstoy, Joyce, and Proust.⁵³ This strategy in the 'Vita Nova' of pursuing the extremes rather than the centre allows Barthes to exclude Gide almost entirely from the overall terms of the project. Gide is mentioned only once in this context when, as if by a sleight of hand, attention is redirected to his 1951 work *Et nunc manet in te*, on the grounds that it memorialises Gide's late wife Madeleine, just as Barthes wishes his *Roman* to be a monument to his own mother.⁵⁴

Inevitably, given his relevance to the aims of the project, Gide does come to be discussed as the course progresses, but this is presented as a digression within a circuitous development of the argument. In his study of the practical process of writing the novel, Barthes arrives at the problem that he terms the 'rivalry between the world and the œuvre', alluding to the problem treated in *The Counterfeiters* of 'the rivalry between the real world and the representation of it which we make to ourselves'.⁵⁵ One 'dialectical solution' to this problem involves an author 'making his life into an œuvre, his Œuvre'.⁵⁶ The *journal* is given as the most direct example of this solution, but Barthes promises to explain at the end of this section why it is actually 'unsatisfactory'.⁵⁷ The subject gives rise to a digression on Barthes's perception of a contemporary, generalised return to the author, and only then does he arrive at a comparison of Gide and Proust, and the different role of biographical elements in their work. Gide's *Journal* is presented as a modern text which, by the 'complexity of its network of enunciation', manages to surpass the problem of 'sincerity', in such a way that the diarist is no longer a documentary 'witness' (as the Goncourt brothers were in their *journal*) but rather an 'actor of writing'.⁵⁸ At this point, Gide's approach appears to be a success worthy of imitation, and which corresponds closely to the terms of the 'Vita Nova':

It's probably the *Journal* that gives meaning to the ensemble-Gide: indeed, it makes a *creative ensemble* out of Life+Work: his œuvre is not among the greatest, and there was nothing heroic about his life [...], but the life asks to be read as entirely orientated towards the formation of the œuvre: and it's this tension, this insistence, this permanence that is a success.⁵⁹

When the course arrives at the promised explanation of the shortcomings of the *journal*, this brief explanation itself seems insufficient. The *journal* carries a risk of 'egotism' (undeniably true), and

requires transformation through the 'labour' ('travail') of writing to become an *œuvre*.⁶⁰ But besides these comments, the question of the usefulness of Gidean diary-writing for the 'Vita Nova' is deferred to a theoretical discussion centred on the concepts of the *Livre* and the *Album* (*Book* and *Album*) borrowed from Mallarmé, a subject which is treated elsewhere in the course, as well as in the article 'Deliberation', with almost no reference to Gide.⁶¹

I shall follow the trace of this reflection in the course, and only say a few closing words about its rather different presentation in 'Deliberation', for reasons that will become apparent. Barthes finds that the first major challenge on the path towards the *œuvre* is the choice of form, the type of work that is desired, irrespective of its theme or content. The author is torn between two ideal, theoretical forms, the *Livre* and the *Album*. The *Livre*, which is the totalising ideal pursued by Mallarmé, has a structure that is 'architectural and premeditated', it may be a *Livre Somme* (*Sum-Total Book*), containing all of one's knowledge, all of one's world, or a *Livre Pur* (*Pure Book*), a concise, dense, essential work.⁶² The *Album* is a collection of parts that lacks the 'architectural and premeditated' structure of the *Livre*, and possesses instead a 'structure founded on the nature of things'. This may be an arbitrary collection without discernible order, or alternatively – and this is typically the case of the *journal* – an 'inventory of circumstances' based on the contingent unfolding of events, with a structure of continuity and rhythm that emerges from a consistent method of writing.⁶³ Unlike Mallarmé, Barthes remains undecided when faced with this choice, but leans towards the *Album*, which can be preferred as a manifestation of the 'rhapsodic', or for its implicit 'pluralist, relativist, sceptical, Taoist philosophy'.⁶⁴ As for the *journal* itself, Barthes's only reservation is whether its supposedly immediate notation remains in the domain of *Parole* (*Speech*), or whether it can be recuperated, given value and permanence, through the hard work of *Écriture* (*Writing*). Above all, it should be remembered that this is not a simple choice between two discrete forms, but a dialectic process that is 'co-extensive to the whole labour of writing', and in which the *journal*, like any other work, is implicated.⁶⁵ One might add that Gide's *Journal* is the single work of diary-writing in which this dialectic is most manifest and significant, since it makes a strong claim to constitute a new type of literary *œuvre* by embracing the virtues of both *Album* and *Livre*.

In the light of this discussion in the course, we might well be perplexed to find the *journal* treated in such a different, even contradictory way, in the article 'Deliberation'. As Lucy O'Meara has

shown, the *journal* and the *Album* are treated here far more negatively: the *journal* is now ‘only’ an *Album*, and to justify publication it must somehow elevate itself to the level of the *Livre*, which is now equated with the literary *œuvre*.⁶⁶ The reason for this abrupt change in attitude is connected to the very nature of this text, and its place in the ‘Vita Nova’. It has been clear for a long time that the particular presentation of the *journal* in ‘Deliberation’ is determined by its strategic role in Barthes’s practice of diary-writing: from the first publication of *Soirées de Paris* it was recognised that ‘Deliberation’ forms a sort of preface to this diary,⁶⁷ and in particular the end of the article emphasizes the strange, experimental nature of its writing project:

[W]e must doubtless conclude that I can rescue the Journal on the condition that I labour it *to death*, to the end of an extreme exhaustion, like a *virtually* impossible Text: a labour at whose end it is indeed possible that the Journal thus kept no longer resembles a Journal at all.⁶⁸

Furthermore, the specimens of Barthes’s diary-writing contained within the article are in fact Barthes’s first and only actual publication of a *journal intime* in his lifetime.⁶⁹ I would argue that ‘Deliberation’ should be considered primarily as a part of the development of Barthes’s diary-writing, which also includes the *Mourning Diary* and *Soirées de Paris*. Together, these constitute a sphere of work within the ‘Vita Nova’ marked by a more active mode of writing, and a positive assumption of the role of writer. Although the project of the ‘Vita Nova’ as a whole is characterised by the mode of simulation, of proceeding as if Barthes were going to write the utopian *Roman*, diary-writing is the area in which Barthes realises more fully his desire to ‘assume a process of production’, and indeed he produces material that is assigned a place within the imagined novel.⁷⁰ As a consequence, ‘Deliberation’ marks the end of Barthes’s relation to Gide as we have seen it so far, as a complex resistance to his constitutive ‘literary soup’. Barthes’s diary-writing itself warrants close examination as a writer’s response to issues raised by Gide’s *Journal*, but now is the moment to draw some conclusions about Barthes’s influence from Gide up to this late point in his career.

From this rapid summary, it might seem that no one term could meaningfully accommodate Barthes’s numerous different attitudes towards Gide. At various points in his career, Barthes successively identifies with and imitates Gide, misrepresents and rejects him (in keeping with the model of an ‘anxiety of influence’), maintains a virtual silence with regard to him, and eventually presents him as if he were a

spectre, barely present throughout Barthes's writing but always threatening to return. As for Barthes's insistence, in *RB by RB*, on Gide's primordial importance for him, there is no doubt about the strong attachment to Gide manifested in 'On Gide and his *Journal*', but it is hardly exceptional for a young author to set out in the footsteps of his or her literary heroes. If the concept of 'Ursuppe' is useful in this case, it is not as a mere expression of the importance of one writer for another, but as a foundation myth. Only in hindsight, when Gide's influence has been suppressed – not on criteria of style, form, or philosophy, but because of his very role as a writer – only then can Gide be evoked as an origin, as constituting the authorial posture that Barthes refuses to assume. This is why the concept of 'Ursuppe' ceases to apply when Barthes finally undertakes his own literary diary-writing project, and takes on the role of a writer, without neurosis, 'without complexes'.⁷¹ Barthes's diaries should be considered as a response to Gide's *Journal*, but precisely in relation to Gide as an other, and no longer as a part of Barthes himself.

Notes

¹ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 99.

² Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: OUP, 1973). Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994). The issue of influence is treated from many different perspectives in *Questions of Influence in Modern French Literature*, ed. by Thomas Baldwin, James Fowler and Ana de Medeiros (London: Palgrave, 2013).

³ Susan Sontag, 'Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes', in *A Barthes Reader* (London: Cape, 1982), pp. vii-xxxvi. James Williams, 'The Moment of Truth: Roland Barthes, "Soirées de Paris" and the Real', *Neophilologus*, 79.1 (1995), 33-51.

⁴ Lawrence Schehr, *Alcibiades at the Door* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 114. Tiphaine Samoyault, *Roland Barthes: biographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2015), pp. 125-43.

⁵ Roland Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', trans. by Richard Howard, in *A Barthes Reader*, pp. 3-17.

⁶ Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980)*, ed. by Nathalie Léger, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 8. Translation modified.

⁷ Roland Barthes, 'Lectures d'enfance', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Éric Marty, 5 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 2002), vol. V, pp. 946-51 (p. 949).

⁸ Roland Barthes, 'Les Vies parallèles', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, pp. 811-13; 'Proust and Names', in *New Critical Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 55-68.

⁹ Roland Barthes, 'Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure...', in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 277-90; 'Ça prend', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. V, pp. 654-56. Proust is also discussed at considerable length in both parts of *The Preparation of the Novel*.

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Le Lexique de l'auteur: séminaire à l'École pratique des hautes études 1973-1974: suivi de Fragments inédits du 'Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes'*, ed. by Anne Herschberg Pierrot (Paris: Seuil, 2010), p. 92. My translation.

¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Soirées de Paris*, in *Incidents*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 49-73.

¹² I address this later stage of Barthes's relationship with Gide, involving his practical diary-writing projects, in the forthcoming article: Sam Ferguson, 'Diary-Writing and the Return of Gide in Barthes's "Vita Nova"', *Textual*

Practice, 30.2 (2016).

¹³ Roland Barthes, 'Plaisir aux classiques', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, pp. 57-67 (p. 57). My translation.

¹⁴ André Gide, *Journal 1889-1939* (Paris: Gallimard Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1939). Maurice Blanchot, despite his reservations about the *journal intime* in general, admits that 'we recognise that the œuvre that best represents [Gide] is the *Journal*'; Blanchot, 'Gide and the Literature of Experience', in *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 212-25 (p. 212). Translation modified.

¹⁵ Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', p. 5.

¹⁶ André Gide, *Les Pages immortelles de Montaigne: choisies et expliquées par André Gide* (Paris: Corrêa, 1939). In Goethe's work, Gide particularly admires the "constant penetration" between his œuvre and his life' (my translation); Anton Alblas, 'L'Œuvre instantanée: le *Journal* d'André Gide, I: Œuvre-vie', *Le Bulletin des Amis d'André Gide*, 139 (2003), 299-310 (p. 303). Alblas is citing from an article by Gide published in the *NRF* in 1932.

¹⁷ Gide, *Les Pages immortelles de Montaigne*, p. 7. My translation.

¹⁸ Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', p. 5.

¹⁹ Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', p. 3. Barthes's discussion of the Protestant history of introspective and confessional writing (including Rousseau, the diarist Henri-Frédéric Amiel, and more broadly, the English novel) is excluded from the translation cited above. See Barthes, 'Notes sur André Gide et son *Journal*', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, pp. 33-46 (pp. 33-34).

²⁰ Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', pp. 3, 6, 12.

²¹ Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', p. 4.

²² Barthes, 'On Gide and his *Journal*', p. 3.

²³ For example: Blanchot, 'Gide and the Literature of Experience' (cited above, first published in 1947); 'Diary and Story', in *The Book to Come*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 183-88 (first published in 1955). There are also frequent allusions to Gide throughout the other texts gathered in *The Book to Come*.

²⁴ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), pp. 14-15, 62-63 (translation modified), 74.

²⁵ Roland Barthes, 'The Writer on Holiday', in *Mythologies*, ed. and trans. by Annette Lavers (New York: Noonday Press, 1991), pp. 27-30.

²⁶ Barthes, 'The Writer on Holiday', p. 27.

²⁷ Barthes, 'The Writer on Holiday', p. 28.

²⁸ Roland Barthes, 'Alain Girard: *Le Journal intime*', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, pp. 806-10. Alain Girard, *Le Journal intime* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963).

²⁹ Barthes, 'Alain Girard: *Le Journal intime*', pp. 806, 808.

³⁰ Girard, *Le Journal intime*, p. 90. My translation.

³¹ Barthes, 'Alain Girard: *Le Journal intime*', pp. 808-09. My translation.

³² Roland Barthes, 'Critique et autocritique', interview with André Burin, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. III, pp. 635-48; 'Réponses', interview with Jean Thibaudeau, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. III, pp. 1023-44; 'Premier texte', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. IV, pp. 497-501.

³³ Barthes, *Le Lexique de l'auteur*, pp. 97, 183. This seminar was published in 2010 together with drafts and rejected fragments for *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. These exclusions cast light on Barthes's preparation of the final published text, and the rejected material notably includes further discussion of 'On Gide and his *Journal*' (pp. 277, 324), and a fragment that presents Gide as a model for Barthes's association of Greek antiquity with homosexuality (p. 323).

³⁴ Roland Barthes, 'Sur André Gide et son *Journal*', *Magazine littéraire*, 97 (February 1975), 24-28 (p. 24). My translation.

³⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Vingt mots-clé pour Roland Barthes', *Magazine littéraire*, 97 (February 1975), 28-37 (p. 35). My translation.

³⁶ Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, pp. 92-93.

³⁷ Roland Barthes, 'Où/ou va la littérature', interview with Maurice Nadeau, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. IV, pp. 547-63 (pp. 555-56); 'Entretien avec Jacques Chancel', in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. IV, pp. 887-906 (p. 889).

³⁸ Barthes, 'Vingt mots-clé pour Roland Barthes', p. 35.

³⁹ Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, pp. 77-79. Translation modified.

⁴⁰ Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 95.

⁴¹ Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 95.

⁴² Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). The first course at the Collège de France, *How to Live Together*, refers heavily to Gide's work *La Séquestrée de Poitiers*; Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). This intertext is discussed by Diana Knight, "Except When Night Falls": Together and Alone in Barthes's *Comment vivre ensemble*, *Paragraph*, 31.1 (2008), 50-60 (pp. 55-56). The course on *The Neutral* cites extensively from *Les Cahiers de la Petite Dame* as a documentary source on Gide in his old age; Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977-1978)*, ed. by Thomas Clerc, trans. by Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Gide's presence in the two parts of *The Preparation of the Novel* is discussed below.

⁴³ The most complete study of the development of Barthes's thought in his work at the Collège de France is Lucy O'Meara's *Roland Barthes at the Collège de France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012). Some other perspectives on this work are collected in a special issue of *Paragraph*, 31.1 (2008). The close relation between *Soirées de Paris* and Barthes's eight sheets of plans for a work entitled *Vita Nova* is examined in detail by Diana Knight in

'Idle Thoughts: Barthes's *Vita Nova*', *Nottingham French Studies*, 36.1 (1997), 88-98. The relation between the *Mourning Diary* and *Camera Lucida* is discussed by Neil Badmington, 'Punctum Saliens: Barthes, Mourning, Film, Photography', *Paragraph* 35.3 (2012), 303-19, and also by Éric Marty, *Roland Barthes: la littérature et le droit à la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 2010), pp. 40-42.

⁴⁴ Roland Barthes, 'Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France', trans. by Richard Howard, in *A Barthes Reader*, pp. 458-78 (pp. 477, 478). Translation modified.

⁴⁵ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Barthes, 'Longtemps...', pp. 288-89.

⁴⁷ Barthes finds that his own 'affective link' relates to the present rather than the past, and so his *Roman* will build on a notation of the present rather than the 'anamnesic' model of Proust; *The Preparation of the Novel*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸ Barthes, 'Longtemps...', p. 288.

⁴⁹ *Soirées de Paris* is referred to under the title 'Vaines Soirées' (Futile Evenings) in the plans for *Vita Nova*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. V, pp. 1007-18 (pp. 1011, 1014). Aside from the ubiquitous references to 'deuil' (mourning), the phrase 'Journal de deuil' (Mourning Diary) is used on p. 1018.

⁵⁰ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 108.

⁵¹ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 19.

⁵² Barthes, 'Longtemps...', p. 288. Translation modified.

⁵³ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁴ Barthes, 'Longtemps...', p. 288, and *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 106. André Gide, *Et nunc manet in te*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952).

⁵⁵ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, pp. 200, 207. André Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, trans. by Dorothy Bussy (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 183.

⁵⁶ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 207.

⁵⁷ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 207.

⁵⁸ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 209.

⁵⁹ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 209. Translation modified.

⁶⁰ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 211.

⁶¹ Barthes, 'Deliberation', trans. by Richard Howard, in *A Barthes Reader*, pp. 479-95.

⁶² Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, pp. 182-85.

⁶³ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, pp. 186-88.

⁶⁴ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 190. Barthes's preference for the *Album* in this context is discussed by Lucy O'Meara, *Roland Barthes at the Collège de France*, pp. 186-89.

⁶⁵ Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 192.

⁶⁶ Lucy O'Meara, *Roland Barthes at the Collège de France*, p. 184.

⁶⁷ François Wahl, introduction to Barthes, *Incidents* (including *Soirées de Paris*) (Paris: Seuil, 1987), pp. 9-10. Diana Knight has explored the complex relations

that connect 'Deliberation' and *Soirées de Paris* to the plans for the novel *Vita Nova*, in 'Idle Thoughts'.

⁶⁸ Barthes, 'Deliberation', p. 495.

⁶⁹ Samoyault has shown, with reference to Barthes's archives, that he had previously undertaken a wide range of private, daily writing practices, but without a direct connection with his public work; Samoyault, *Roland Barthes*, p. 139.

⁷⁰ Barthes, 'Longtemps...', p. 289. Translation modified.

⁷¹ Barthes, 'Deliberation', p. 493.

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