SECRET DOSSIERS: SEXUALITY, RACE, AND TREASON IN PROUST AND THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

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The Jew was created by God to serve as a spy wherever treason is in preparation.

—Civilità Cattolica, qtd in Nicholas Halasz, Captain Dreyfus

Homosexuals find nothing in France to their taste, not even the homeland, for they are internationalists.

—Armand Dubarry, Les Invertis (le vice allemande)

I do believe I was the first Dreyfusard.

—Marcel Proust, attributed

This essay investigates the representations of and relationships among male homosexuality, Jewish identity, and nationalism in Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, focusing on Proust's treatment of the Dreyfus Affair, a turn-of-the-century espionage scandal involving a Jewish officer in the French Army. Writing his magnum opus in the years just before and during World War I, when nationalism and France's national aspirations were again crucially at stake, Proust found in the Dreyfus Affair a rich, politically current discursive paradigm for analyzing both Jewishness and homosexuality in relation to national identity. While
many critics have discussed the novelist's lifelong interest in the Affair; none that I am aware of have noted that it was the centrality, not only of Jewishness, but also of sexuality, to the Affair that made it such a useful paradigm for Proust, allowing him to use "espionage" as an analog for Jewish and homosexual experience and thus to offer a reading of subaltern cultural and sexual identities and practices as treason.

Let us take a moment here to clarify the relationship between espionage and treason. Spies dissimulate their identities in order to convey information about one person or group to another person or group. Not all spies are traitors to their own nation, of course, but all are treacherous; they lie and deceive, performing loyalties that they do not actually feel. A spy's ability to pass as someone or something else is what makes such an agent both useful and irremediably dangerous. A spy's employer—a country, for instance—can never be sure that even the most apparently patriotic and dependable spy is not really a double agent. Thus, in the cultural imagination of nineteenth-century Europe, the ability of Jews and homosexuals to pass across normative, visible boundaries of racial and sexual classification left perpetually open the possibility that supposed members of the national community were only feigning allegiances they really owed to another racial or sexual tribe.

Proust's reading of the relations between Jewishness, deviant sexuality, and treason was particularly responsive to predominant fin-de-siècle European cultural anxieties about the legibility of difference. Sander Gilman and others have demonstrated that there was an entrenched European tradition of concatenating Jewishness with sexual and/or gender deviance, dating back at least to the medieval period, when it was believed that Jewish men menstruated, thus failing to conform to gender norms so thoroughly as to constitute an interruption not only of the social, but of the natural, order. By the nineteenth century, scientific interest in the classification of biological types had modernized Christian religious hostility to both Judaism and sodomy, so that Jewishness and homosexuality were now apt to be viewed as pathic conglomerations of psychological and biological traits proper to all or most of the members of these classifications.

Thus the two categories were analogous in their configuration; most obviously, as one critic notes, "Both Jew and homosexual are other to society's Christian and heterosexual norms" (Diamant 179). But "Jew"
and "homosexual" (or "invert"), were not merely comparable terms for marginality or difference; the two were often mapped onto each other, mutually constructing each other in specific, significant ways as physiologically, socially, and politically alien. One of the most common (and for Proust, most significant) topoi of that mapping, for instance, was the already existing imbrication of Jewishness, the effeminate, and sexual decadence in Orientalist rhetoric, so that one French sexologist could speculate that Jews were, as orientals, particularly prone to homosexuality: "Must we not then believe that inversion occurs more frequently in the Jewish race, which has remained, despite its infinitely variable and mobile appearances, entirely, exclusively, oriental?" (Saint-Paul 105–06). Morris Kaplan has neatly summarized the primary points of intersection between Jews and homosexuals in medical, popular, religious, and juridical fin-de-siècle discourses:

Like homosexuals, Jews were understood in terms of biologically based inherent characteristics, and yet thought to be capable of a dissembling invisibility. They shared access to a "hidden language" understood only by others of their kind; possession of a distinctive pattern of speech that involuntarily revealed their "inner nature"; propensities to mental illness and physical disease, especially those linked with sexuality; identification with urban living and with the ills of urban civilization; perception as sources of danger to normal families; incapacity to discharge the (manly) duties of citizens, especially military service; and a tendency to debilitating self-hatred. (Kaplan 125)

The "dissembling invisibility" of Jews and homosexuals raised complex dilemmas about (self) revelation, assimilation, and secrecy for members of the two groups. Openly to adopt cultural practices, clothing, mannerisms, or a vocabulary that announced one's difference meant inviting hostility, discrimination, and sometimes prosecution and violence. On the other hand, to try to conform to gentile or heterosexual norms meant, precisely, to dissemble what gentile, heterosexual culture believed to be the intrinsically different nature of the Jew or homosexual and thus to confirm that Jews and homosexuals were indeed different because they dissembled: because they were secretive, untrustworthy, treacherous.
In addition, these opaque identities could only with difficulty be placed in the categories meaningful to the state. A citizen is supposed to be "on call" for his nation, prepared to render it a given quantity of loyalty which cannot be divided or multiplied. But Jewish community historically precedes nation-states; furthermore, Jewish families that extended across nations "figured importantly in the perception of Jews as having no loyalty to local communities" (Kaplan 114), enforcing suspicions that Jews' allegiances were either sub- or supranational. Homosexuals were similarly assumed to be essentially cosmopolitan and without national loyalty: "Homosexuals find nothing in France to their taste, not even the fatherland, for they are internationalists" (Dubarry 150).

This deeply rooted stereotype of Jews as the eternally stateless, intrinsically alien to any and all national communities, also drew on the supposedly inadequate or deviant gender identity of the Jewish male. Kaplan specifies that both Jews and homosexuals were charged with the "incapacity to discharge the (manly) duties of citizens, especially military service" (125). In Germany, for example, Jewish men were often rejected for military service because they were too short, and then it was argued "that Jews could not become true citizens because they were worthless as soldiers due to their physical stature" (Gilman 40). An 1892 French newspaper editorial complained indignantly about the inability of Jews in the cavalry to sit a horse properly, demonstrating their deficiency of both masculinity and breeding (Crémieu-Foa 86). We can presume, then, that Jews and male homosexuals were considered inadequate to citizenship partly because they were perceived as feminine, and women were not citizens. Furthermore, because homosexuals shirked the duties of the mature bourgeois husband and father, they were characterized as perpetually adolescent, immature in their moral capacity, untrustworthy. And they, like Jews, were understood to constitute a kind of secret society existing within the larger social context. As Daniel Itzkovitz writes,

Not only were the terms sodomite and homosexual strategically attached to Jewish men in the popular imaginary [. . .] but there are several basic similarities in the ways anxieties concerning the sodomite and the Jew were popularly represented. The most prominent of these commonalities is the trope of secrecy, or hiddenness. The Jew, like the homosexual, was seen as having a hidden identity, and both
were imagined to perform secret acts that substantiated their elusive identities. (179)

The secrecy and treacherousness identified with Jewish and homosexual ontology—the potentially opaque alterity of the Jew or the homosexual—excited violent fears that the nation could be surreptitiously undermined by "moles" whose true loyalties might turn out to lie with their clan, race, or biological type rather than with their nation. Significantly, unlike racially marked colonial subjects, Jews and homosexuals were typically identified as being prone to treason rather than, for instance, rebellion; as double agents, invisible Others passing as the Same, they could act like, and on behalf of, both the "Us" within the nation and the "Them" outside of it.

The Dreyfus Affair, which began in 1894 and lasted more than a decade, crystallized these anxieties in the French national consciousness. In analyzing the Affair it is important to note that, in France, the stereotype of the deracinated Jew had to intersect with real improvements in Jews' legal and civic standing before the trope of "treason" could assume its full force. French Jews were granted citizenship in 1791. During the following century, as Jewish emancipation and assimilation started becoming legally and culturally established realities—as French Jews gave up wearing distinctive clothing, lost their accents, were admitted to civil service positions and so on—their legal status as citizens came to collide with their ideological status as aliens.

It seems clear, in fact, that the Affair could not have erupted in a culture of unalloyed anti-Semitism, when we consider the logic of an editorial in the leading journal of the anti-Semites at the time, the Libre Parole; the writer affirmed that "In order for a man to betray his country it is necessary first of all that he has a country, and that country cannot be acquired by an act of naturalization" (qtd. in Lewis 52). In Remembrance, Proust, who was embroiled in the Affair as a young man, attributes this view to the deeply anti-Semitic Baron de Charlus, who says to the narrator:

"It is not a bad idea, if you wish to learn about life [...] to have a few foreigners among your friends." I replied that Bloch was French. "Indeed," said M. de Charlus, "I took him to be a Jew." His assertion of this incompatibility made me suppose that M.
de Charlus was more anti-Dreyfusard than anyone I had met. He protested, however, against the charge of treason levelled against Dreyfus. But his protest took this form: "I believe the newspapers say that Dreyfus has committed a crime against his country—so I understand. [...] In any case, the crime is non-existent. This compatriot of [Bloch] would have committed a crime if he had betrayed Judaea, but what has he to do with France? [...] Your Dreyfus might rather be convicted of a breach of the laws of hospitality." (Guermantes Way 390)

Obviously, the cultural anxiety about Jewish treachery could not have emerged fully from these outer limits of anti-Semitism. Rather, it was only when mainstream opinion had shifted enough to acknowledge Jews as legitimate citizens that they could be widely viewed as potential double, rather than foreign, agents: not agents of "Judaea" working in France, but Frenchmen working for France and Judaea, or appearing to work for France but really working for Judaea.

The Affair, then, did not so much uncover a fundamental French xenophobia as force a critical confrontation in France among juridical, biologico-racial, and mythological definitions of the nation-state. "Anti-revisionists" (Dreyfus's opponents) saw the nation as an organic union bonded by blood, by the Catholic Church (a Concordat with the Papacy at the beginning of the century had officially established the Church "as an organic institution of the State" [Chapman 16]), and, if they were royalists, by the monarchy. Dreyfus's supporters tended instead to understand the nation as a contractual union impartially guaranteeing specific rights to all parties to the contract. For anti-revisionists, Jews were an unassimilable threat to national unity; for Dreyfusards, they were a minority group whose equal status under the law would demonstrate France's commitment to the secular values of the Revolution.

It may be helpful at this point to revisit some of the salient features of the Affair, as a necessary first step in understanding the significance it held for Proust. In the early 1890s there was a French maid working at the German Embassy, secretly employed by French Intelligence, who routinely delivered the contents of the German military attaché's
wastepaper basket to her superiors. These documents ranged from communiqués from spies to salacious notes from one of Colonel von
Schwartzkoppen's lovers, the Italian military attaché Alessandro Panizziardi,
often referring to espionage activities as well as to the men's sexual
relations. In 1894, this maid turned over to the Intelligence service a
document—the infamous "bordereau," or list—written in an unknown
hand, listing classified documents to be delivered to Schwartzkoppen.
Handwriting samples from a small circle of suspects who had access to
the classified material led the War Office to accuse Captain Alfred Dreyfus,
a Jewish officer with the General Staff of the War Office, of having authored
the bordereau.

Dreyfus came from a wealthy, partially assimilated Alsatian family
that settled in Paris after Alsace was lost to Prussia in the war of 1870–
71. In 1892, Dreyfus, who had been trained as an engineer, joined the
General Staff of the French Army, assuming this post at a point when,
prompted by several political and financial crises, a fiercely ideological
anti-Semitism was emerging in certain sectors of French society. Despite
Dreyfus's strong academic record, a number of officers opposed his
appointment to the General Staff, either because of personal anti-Semitism
or because they felt anti-Semitism would interfere with his work; for
example, Major du Paty de Clam, who was to play a major role in the
campaign against Dreyfus, is supposed to have said, "I had very good
relations with intelligent, artistic, and scholarly Jews. . . . But there are
some situations in which persons who are not incontrovertibly French
ought not be placed" (qtd. in Lewis 21).

While there is no reason to think that Dreyfus was framed for
writing the bordereau specifically because he was Jewish, there can be
little doubt that once he was mentioned as a suspect, "the fact that he
was a Jew became—complementary or conclusive—grounds for
presuming his guilt" (Bredin 533), particularly since the bordereau was
addressed to a German diplomat and French anti-Semitism consistently
identified Jews with Germany. Maurice Barrès wrote simply, "That Dreyfus
is capable of treason I deduce from his race" (152). When Dreyfus's
name was suggested, the head of the Intelligence service allegedly
exclaimed to a colleague, "That race has neither patriotism, nor honor,
nor pride. For centuries, they have done nothing but betray" (qtd. in
Paléologue 21). The fact that Dreyfus, like most Alsatians, spoke several
languages—notably fluent German—was used as evidence against him at his trial, hinting as it did at the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy. Various colleagues of Dreyfus were found to give vaguely hostile reports on his character, possibly inspired by his difficult personality—he apparently lacked personal charm—but probably fueled by racial prejudice. Despite his protestations of innocence and the thinness of the evidence against him (a point to which I will return below), Dreyfus was quickly convicted by a court martial of treason and sentenced to deportation in perpetuity to Devil’s Island, off the coast of South America. He would spend almost five years there before his supporters were able to get the case retried.

Once the guilty verdict was announced, the nationalist and anti-Semitic press lost no time in denouncing all Jews as a race of traitors. Norman Kleeblatt has noted the significance of exiling Dreyfus to an island that had been a leper colony, as if his alleged crime, inextricably involved with his race, were a contagious disease (85). This belief in the intrinsic treacherousness of Jews was accompanied in the anti-Semitic press by an insistence on their distinctive physical characteristics, the equivalent of the leper’s bell that would permit healthy citizens to identify and isolate the menace to national security. No matter how minute—or how ludicrous—the distinction in question, it was crucial that it should be found and that the general public should learn to recognize it. In late-nineteenth-century Western Europe, indeed, we find a proliferation of texts explaining to the (gentile) public how to spot Jews. A few years before Dreyfus was accused Edouard Drumont, editor of the *Libre Parole*, had written, "The principal signs by which a Jew may be recognized are thus: the famous hooked nose, frequently blinking eyes, teeth tightly together, ears sticking out, fingernails that are square rather than almond-shape, a torso too long, flat feet, rounded knees, extraordinarily protruding ankles, the limp and melting hand of a hypocrite and traitor. They frequently have one arm longer than the other" (35). Given this passionate will to believe in Jewish physiological difference, anti-Semites must have been deeply distressed by Dreyfus’s blond hair and blue eyes, which seemed to demonstrate, alarmingly, that the race of traitors might be invisible as they mixed among the French. As if in desperation, the nationalist press seized on his faintly aquiline—but, for Barrès, clearly "ethnic"—nose (Barrès 17). His nose was reassuring; it was not a French
nose. In the *Figaro* of January 6, 1895, shortly after Dreyfus's conviction, Léon Daudet (a friend of Proust's, despite their political differences) wrote with evident relief, "Above the wreckage of so many beliefs, a single faith remains authentic and sincere: that which safeguards our race, our language, the blood of our blood, and which keeps us all in solidarity. The closed ranks are our own. This wretch is not French. We have all understood as much from his act, his demeanor, his physiognomy" (qtd. in Bredin 7). "In essence," Kleeblatt comments, "the army exploited Alfred Dreyfus to prove that dormant, typecast Jewish features and behavior could be reinscribed onto the body of a Jew who [. . .] could pass for Gentile. As treasonous criminal, Dreyfus could help exemplify that beneath every Jew—no matter how assimilated his appearance—lurked a sinister alien" (78).

Kleeblatt goes on to suggest that Dreyfus, thus made safely legible in his difference and segregated from the body politic, might have been serving as a "surrogate" onto which the Army could displace an even more profound and less nameable hostility toward the sexual difference manifested in Schwartzkoppen and Panizzardi:

As archetypical Jew, a secure stereotype and carefully researched specimen for the medical science of the time, Dreyfus could displace the homosexual. [. . .] So the reinscribed body of Alfred Dreyfus, the "passing" Jewish soldier, offered a surrogate for the "passing" homosexual and military bodies of Schwartzkoppen and Panizzardi. As homosexuals and foreigners, these two men may have been ultimately even more threatening, and certainly less controllable, than French Jews. (88)

Kleeblatt accounts for this sense of "threat" by reasoning that while the French officers who had access to the Schwartzkoppen-Panizzardi correspondence might have been pleased to discover that one of their German archenemies was "less than [a man]" (88), it is equally plausible that they would have been disturbed by the implication that the French army could have been vanquished in 1871 by, so to speak, a nation of pansies. By disciplining and exiling one effeminate, alien body, then, they could symbolically master the much larger problem of France's military inferiority to Germany.
This is an intriguing reading, but I would argue that the play of transference between Jewishness and sex/gender deviance in the Affair extended far beyond, and was far more complicated than, this one symbolic substitution of "Jew" for "homosexual." Surrogacy—a person, thing, or sign standing in for another person, thing, or sign—is, after all, integral to espionage, as are other forms of "code switching": disguise, encoding, secrecy, pretense. A discourse about sex/gender deviance runs throughout the Affair, more encoded, more subterranean than the discourses of Semitism, sexuality and Jewishness always "standing (in) for," pointing to, both each other and treason.

In order to persuade the jurors of the court martial that Dreyfus was guilty, for example, the Army needed more convincing evidence than the bordereau and so showed the jury a "secret dossier" that was not shared with Dreyfus or his counsel. The centerpiece of the dossier consisted of letters between Schwartzkoppen and Panizzardi, laced with both sodomitical endearments and references to a mysterious "D" who, the Army assured the jurors, was certainly Dreyfus. In the years that followed Dreyfus's conviction, the secret dossier—a dossier with the erotic correspondence between two men at its core—would become both the foundation, and the undoing, of the Army's case.

By late 1895, the information that secret evidence had illegally been shown to the jurors without the defendant's knowledge had been leaked to several people, and Dreyfus's family and a few other supporters were beginning to demand a "revision" of the verdict, a retrial. In September of 1896, L'Eclair referred publicly to the secret dossier for the first time, in an article that was probably covertly authored by a member of the General Staff attempting to squash public doubt about the case. The paper printed an incorrect version of one letter from Panizzardi to Schwartzkoppen containing the line, "Decidedly, this beast of a Dreyfus has been demanding" (qtd. in Halasz 69), a sentence that appears nowhere in the original document. While glossing the letter's opaque reference to "D." to translate it into transparent evidence of Dreyfus's guilt, however, the paper also theorized that the letter was written in secret code and thus could not be made public without jeopardizing the work of French Intelligence: "it may be imagined that [the code] was of too great a usefulness for such a secret to be publicly divulged" (qtd. in Thomas 276). In fact, though, the only "code" in this particular docu-
ment was the use of Panizzardi's feminized nickname, "Alexandrine," and the word "bourrer," conventionally translated as "to bugger." Thus the semiotics of homo sex was read as code; the words function as the sign of secret knowledge, simultaneously involving sexuality and espionage. Buggery could not merely name itself; it must instead, or also, be made to name an act of treachery.

In thus attempting to make treason unambiguously legible the General Staff was putting itself in an untenable position. First, to acknowledge the secret dossier at all meant admitting that Dreyfus's court martial had been illegal, which could, and did, eventually lead to a retrial. Furthermore, they could not prove Dreyfus's guilt beyond all doubt without presenting documents that stated in unequivocal language that he was guilty. But even if he had been guilty, such documents would not have existed because any actual correspondence about a spy would have been in code; after the L'Eclair piece appeared what puzzled those who knew anything about espionage was that "Intelligence officers never mentioned the most minor agent by name in any communication" (Halasz 69). After all, secret agents are, by definition, supposed to have opaque identities. Thus, whether Dreyfus were innocent or guilty, there ought not, logically, to have been any unambiguous—uncoded—evidence against him. The General Staff could only prove its case by disproving it, "translating" homoeroticism into treason to make something clear that actually should have been occulted if they had been right—or wrong.

The problem of the mistranslation of erotic language surfaces again in another document in the secret dossier, an 1894 telegram sent from Panizzardi to his superiors in Rome just after Dreyfus was arrested. In it Panizzardi denies all knowledge of Dreyfus and suggests that Rome make an official statement to that effect. This telegram actually was in code, written in a cipher that French intelligence had managed to crack (without the Italians knowing, of course) by decoding another, unrelated, correspondence between two heterosexual Italian lovers. A French official, Maurice Paléologue, said of that correspondence that it "was perfectly clear and frank, for it expressed nothing but simple, elemental, natural feelings" (32). Heterosex, it would seem, is "perfectly clear and frank" even when it is in code, but homosexuality is read as code even when it is perfectly clear! Despite the alleged transparency of the type of eroticism affiliated with this cipher, however, the General Staff still managed
to mutilate its translation of Panizzardi’s telegram so that rather than exculpating Dreyfus, it explicitly named him as a spy. It is somehow not surprising that it was the mistranslation that made its way into the secret dossier, although Paléologue at least, and probably others in French Intelligence, had copies of the correct translation.

The secret dossier, with its decoded, re-encoded, mistranslated erotic texts and their surrogates, is a singularly clamant example of sexuality’s centrality to the Affair, but by no means the only one. If homoerotic texts were made to convey “sensitive” information, homosexual men were also important conduits for that information, with a number of consequences for the Affair. Political and sexual secrets were transmitted through a covert network of male friends and lovers in which personal relationships were shaped by the exigencies of the closet and the pressures of homophobia; the vicissitudes of those relationships changed political history. The most curious example of this is that after Oscar Wilde’s release from prison, he became involved in the Affair through Carlos Blacker, a mutual friend of both Panizzardi and Wilde. Now, Panizzardi was, like Schwartzkoppen, quite distressed by what they both knew to be Dreyfus’s wrongful imprisonment, but neither could reveal the truth without betraying the real traitor, Major Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy, who had been selling state secrets to Schwartzkoppen for some time before the bordereau he had written was intercepted. Probably a more important consideration (since Schwartzkoppen had no fondness for Esterhazy, though he was willing to use him as an agent) was that the attachés could not set the record straight without admitting both their own sexual relationship and that they were involved in espionage, in defiance of international law.

But when Esterhazy, after being publicly accused of writing the bordereau, was court-martialed and acquitted of treason, Panizzardi and his friend Blacker conceived of a plan to leak their inside information about Esterhazy to the international media, hoping to persuade the general public of his guilt and, consequently, of Dreyfus’s innocence. Blacker discussed this plan with Wilde, apparently hoping to spur him to a sense of sympathetic outrage that would inspire him to write something in Dreyfus’s defense; and here Blacker would seem to have come very close to acknowledging the correspondence, to which Proust would later point, between Wilde’s unjust imprisonment for committing sexual acts
that would not have been criminal in France and Dreyfus's unjust imprison-ment for a political act that he had not committed at all.

Wilde, however, broke with Blacker soon afterwards because the latter disapproved of his renewed relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, and Wilde passed on his former friend’s confidences to two other homosexual men, the journalist Rowland Strong and Strong’s lover Chris Healy. Healy in turn gave the information to Emile Zola, through whom it eventually passed to Dreyfusard journalists who published it: but Strong tipped off Esterhazy, who was thus able to pre-empt the Dreyfusards by announcing that what was about to be published about him was false. Strong and Healy broke up over the incident (Maguire 11), and these multiple betrayals of confidence deflected what might have been a major coup by the Dreyfusards.

In August of 1898, Esterhazy confessed to Strong, in an interview published in the London Observer, that he had indeed authored the bordereau. When he was called to serve as a witness during Dreyfus’s 1899 retrial, however, he denied making this confession, saying that "he was not going to discuss the fantasies of an English newsman—Esterhazy paused—‘who has as his close friends two very intelligent men with whom he lives in a fairly constant fashion, Lord Alfred Douglas and Sir Oscar Wilde’" (qtd. in Lewis 261). Apparently Wilde’s name serves here as a perfectly recognizable synonym for homosexuality, and in turn homosexuality is recognized as, in and of itself, evidence of unreliability and mendacity.

This helps explain the liberality with which both sides in the Affair, but especially the anti-revisionists, accused those on the other side of homosexuality and cross-dressing. To cite just one example, the anti-Dreyfusard General Gonse, one of the architects of the Army’s cover-up, wrote a hostile report about the pro-Dreyfus whistle-blower Lt.-Colo-nel Georges Picquart, "suggesting that Picquart shared the sexual mores of Panizzardi: 'In a certain society, Picquart is known under the name of Georgette.' Gonse also mentioned a police report supposedly confirming these proclivities, stating that 'this report [.] would explain the attitude of Picquart in the Dreyfus Case'" (Lewis 223). As in Esterhazy’s testimony, the connection between effeminacy/homosexuality and treach-ery is apparently considered too obvious to require any further expla-nation.
This intervolution of sexual deviance, espionage, and treachery was eventually made completely explicit when Zola fictionalized the Affair in his *roman à clef* _Vérité_ (1903) and changed the crime with which the "Dreyfus" character, the innocent Jewish protagonist, is wrongly charged—from treason, to homosexual rape and murder, as if one could simply stand in for the other. A few years later Proust, like Zola, would choose in his own fiction to access the elaborate discourses of race and sexuality that the Affair had mobilized. But where Zola's aim was to attack the anti-Semitic prejudice that associated Jews with crime, disloyalty, and deviance, Proust was more interested in exploring, exploiting, and sometimes even affirming that connection in order to destabilize rigid conceptions of cultural and national identity.

In *Remembrance*, Dreyfusism and illicit sexuality are, Eve Sedgwick has written, "the organizing principles for one another as they are for the volumes through which they ramify" (177), interlaced in explicit allusions, implicit juxtaposition, and especially the recurrent themes and images of espionage, spies, treason, secrets, false identities, and changing loyalties. In our first glimpse of the Baron de Charlus, for instance, the protagonist metaphorically describes him as a *spy* because of the way Charlus is looking at him, with a singular expression that Marcel cannot yet interpret as homoerotic desire: "[Charlus's] eyes were shot through by a look of restless activity such as the sight of a person they do not know excites only in men in whom, for whatever reason, it inspires thoughts that would not occur to anyone else—madmen, for instance, or spies" (*WBG* 452). It is also well before Marcel realizes that Charlus is an invert that Charlus analogizes his own sexual experience to a "secret dossier" that he would like to communicate to a deserving young man in need of instruction:

I have often thought, Monsieur, that there was in me [...] a wealth of experience, a sort of secret dossier of inestimable value, of which I have not felt myself at liberty to make use for my own personal ends, which would be a priceless acquisition to a young man to whom I would hand over in a few months what it has taken me more than thirty years to acquire [...].
And I do not speak only of events that have already occurred, but of the chain of circumstances. [. . .] I could give you an explanation that no one has dreamed of, not only of the past but of the future. (GW 389)

Quite early on, then, we learn that the secret dossier of homo- sexual experience is the key to decoding everything, a kind of master hermeneutics that can explain not just the Dreyfus Affair, but all of history. It takes Marcel—and the reader with him—a long time, however, to learn this cipher. In a sense the whole of *Remembrance* serves as a decoding device; part of the novel's project is to involve the (putatively) heterosexual, gentile reader in the unveiling of the mysteries of inversion and Jewishness so that we can piece together the proleptic fragments of information in the earlier volumes and reinsert them into a coherent narrative later on. But before this is possible Marcel will have to spend a great deal of time in the central volumes of *Remembrance* learning the "foreign tongue" of inversion, which poses a challenge to his linguistic abilities in the sheer bewildering variety of its vocabulary. After all, in just one single, breathtaking, three-page sentence in the section of *Sodom and Gomorrah* called "La Race des Tantes," Proust refers to it as a crime, a disease, a race, an innate disposition, a freemasonry, an identity, an anachronistic fiction, and a vice. And in addition, like Jewishness, inversion is a psychological state; a colony; a culture; a fact of nature; a genetic tendency; but also a germ, something that can and does spread.

For the purposes of this essay, however, we will concern ourselves primarily with the most persistent characterization of homosexuality in Proust, the identification of homosexuals as a *race*. Both male homosexuals and lesbians constitute foreign races with their own distinct national languages, cultures, and sign systems. The nation of Gomorrah is in fact so essentially, ontologically foreign that Marcel never does learn to speak the language;¹³ lesbians are not so much another nation as a different species altogether. After Albertine's death he thinks to himself that she always concealed her lesbianism from him

as a woman might conceal from me that she was a native of an enemy country and a spy, and far more treacherously even than a spy, for the latter deceives us only as to her nationality, whereas Albertine had deceived me as to her profoundest
Lesbianism, then, remains utterly specularly, aurally, and epistemologically impenetrable to Marcel throughout the text.\textsuperscript{14} But male homosexuality can eventually be understood, and this understanding is, in large part, effected for the narrator through the analogy of Jewishness.

The parallel between homosexuals and Jews, suggested briefly in earlier passages, is explicitly announced in Sodom and Gomorrah's Biblical title and carried on in the long passage in "La Race des Tantes" where Proust creates the myth of his Sodomites, who, condemned to destruction, were allowed out of Sodom by a naïve heterosexual angel who believed their cover stories about wives and children and let them go out into the world to "engender a numerous progeny," as numerous as the descendants of Abraham (43). In addition, Proust often likens revelations of homosexuality to revelations in Racine's plays that certain characters are Jewish; in particular, the Biblical story of Esther serves as a model for what Sedgwick calls the epistemology of the closet: "these rapid revelations [of homosexuality were] similar to those which in Racine's tragedies inform Athalie and Abner that Joas is of the House of David, that Esther, 'enthroned in the purple,' has 'Yid' parents" (SG 87). Proust also describes both Jews and homosexuals as freemasons, members of secret societies with elaborate rituals and private codes.

In some places the comparison is furthered by a rhetorical strategy in which A and B are not explicitly analogous, but rather have the same function. Thus, in the following line, Jewishness and the vice of homosexuality are both used as examples of another phenomenon, the persistence of traits across time and generations: "I had seen the vices and the courage of the Guermantes recur in Saint-Loup [. . .] as in Swann his Semitism" (TR 352-53). In another scene, we learn that conversation with a homosexual can give the same pleasure that is generated by travel in the "Orient," including Palestine:

Brichot, who had often expounded the second Eclogue of Virgil without really knowing whether its fiction had any basis in reality, belatedly found, in conversing with Charlus, some of the pleasure which he knew that his [literary] masters [. . .]
had felt when travelling in Spain, Palestine and Egypt on recognising in the landscapes and the present inhabitants of Spain, Palestine and Egypt the settings and the selfsame actors of the ancient scenes which they themselves had expounded in their books. (C 441)

This is only one of many instances in which "Oriental" or, more properly speaking, Orientalized, languages, sites, objets d’art, literatures, and peoples furnish the scenery, the stage props, as it were, for a discussion or enactment of the homoerotic in the novel. The "strange tongue" of homosexuality is most frequently compared to Eastern languages understood by only a few Europeans: Sanskrit, Japanese, Russian, Hebrew. Robert de Saint-Loup-en-Bray, at a point when we already know that he is homosexual, nonetheless insists to Marcel, when pressed, that "As for the sort of thing you allude to, it means about as much to me as Sanskrit" (TR 21). When Marcel first realizes that Charlus is homosexual, he describes that point "when, upon the smooth surface of an individual indistinguishable from everyone else, there suddenly appears, traced in an ink hitherto invisible, the characters that compose the word dear to the ancient Greeks," that is, paederastia. A few lines later, he compares this sort of revelation to those that can save people from social gaffes, as when someone conveys, to a speaker about to insult a lady, the whispered information that she is the lover of someone present. That information appears, Proust writes, like a Mene, Tekel, Upharsin—the mysterious words written by the hand of God, and which only a Jew, Daniel, can translate for the Babylonian king (SG 18–19). Knowledge about other people’s secret sexual identities, like knowledge about Jewish culture, is transmitted in code, invisible or untranslatable except to initiates.

By the novel’s final volume, the Orient and the homoerotic have both erupted as explicit and dramatic sites of signification, staged in elaborate theatrical fantasies that underline their contiguity. As Marcel strolls through Paris one night during the Great War, for instance, he has "the impression of an oriental vision" (TR 106); allied troops including Africans and Indians are walking by, and he writes that they are "enough to transform for me this Paris through which I was walking into a whole imaginary exotic city, an oriental scene," which he compares to Jerusalem or Constantinople (TR 106). In a typical gesture of unglossed apposition, Marcel then tells us in the next sentence that as he walks he sees a man
"to whose purplish face I hesitated whether I should give the name of an actor or a painter, both equally notorious for innumerable sodomist scandals" (TR 106). The metonymy between the Oriental and the homosexual is reinforced a few pages later when Marcel think of the Arabian Nights before setting off for Jupien's brothel and comments that all the taxis he sees are "driven by Levantines or negroes" (TR 173).

Proust also adds one more twist to what would otherwise be a somewhat conventional, albeit brilliantly elaborated, association between the exoticism of the Orient and the exoticism of deviance. He brings perversity back home, as it were, by describing homosexuals themselves as an "oriental colony" within any nation they inhabit: "Certainly they form in every land an oriental colony, cultured, musical, malicious, which has charming qualities and intolerable defects" (SG 43). Thus, as Charlus's most banal utterances are invested with the foreign allure of a Russian or Japanese play, homosexuals carry with them in their Diaspora the attributes of the other, phantasmatic, nation to which they, like Jews, are believed implicitly to belong. And in the end their loyalty to that "race," that other, mythical country—Sodom—is much stronger than their acculturation within heterosexual society, stronger even than the loyalty of Jews to their colony in the face of pressure to assimilate to gentile culture.

Possibly even the example of the Jews, of a different type of colony, is not strong enough to account for the frail hold that their upbringing has upon them, and for the skill and cunning with which they find their way back [...] to a life whose compulsive pleasures the men of the other race not only cannot understand, cannot imagine, abominate, but whose frequent danger and constant shame would horrify them [...]. (SG 33)

The most salient feature of the comparison is precisely this question of loyalty and assimilation. Because members of both "colonies" have at least some ability to pass as citizens of their host "nations," their identities are deeply marked by the ways in which they are able to assume or refuse them. Their lives are governed by the question of secrecy—how much secrecy is possible, or desirable, and under what circumstances—and by the codes they develop to maintain community even under the
crushing pressure of the injunction to effect an assimilation that is both mandatory and impossible.

Developing coded ways of communicating with others in these invisible communities is crucial to maintaining distinct identities and to protecting potentially incriminating speech acts, especially among homosexual men. Paradoxically, though, the knowledge of these codes, used to conceal—Hebrew, Yiddish, the semiotics of cruising—can also reveal too much. Marcel always fears that Charlus, in insisting on his specialized knowledge of homosexuality, will betray himself. Similarly, the ability of Jews to dissimulate their meaning can become the thing that exposes—that keeps them from dissimulating—their identities, as when they inadvertently use a Hebrew word in front of Gentiles.

"Meschores," in the Bible, means "the servant of God." In the family circle the Blochs used the word to refer to the servants, and were always delighted by it, because their certainty of not being understood either by Christians or by the servants themselves enhanced in M. Nissim Bernard and M. Bloch their twofold distinction of being "masters" and at the same time "Jews." But this latter source of satisfaction became a source of displeasure when there was "company." At such times M. Bloch, hearing his uncle say "meschores," felt that he was over-exposing his oriental side, just as a harlot who has invited some of her sisters to meet her respectable friends is annoyed if they allude to their profession or use objectionable words. (WBG 484)

Thus these coded verbal communications, normally reserved for the members of the freemasonry, can sometimes be deciphered by others, a fact that is not without its risks for the subaltern whose ability to pass is thereby threatened.

This is especially true, as Proust shows us, in the context of the Dreyfus Affair, when a political choice is likely to be viewed as an indicator of ontological status (recall Gonse's assertion that Picquart's alleged homosexuality "would account for his attitude in the Dreyfus Case"). Indeed the most political ramifications of Proust's analogy between inversion and Jewishness are made explicit when homosexuals are compared, not just to Jews, but to Dreyfusards, that is, people both Jewish
and Gentile who have a particular, deliberate, ethical, and political relation to Jewishness in a given historical moment. In Proust's usage the Dreyfus Affair both affirms an identity between blood and political affiliation—all Jews in the novel are Dreyfusards—and ruptures it—not all Dreyfusards in the novel are Jews, and furthermore, even the different Jewish characters support Dreyfus with varying degrees of enthusiasm inflected, among other things, by their class status. Swann, for instance, does support Dreyfus as if instinctively, "as a Jew" (SG 152). Yet he also negotiates his political relationship to Jewish identity much more carefully than Bloch does, fearing that his opponents will perceive Jewish support for Picquart as illegitimately biased—or, worse, as evidence that the entire Affair is indeed a conspiracy by international Jewry.

Swann interested Bloch greatly by telling him that the Prince de Guermantes was a Dreyfusard. "We must ask him to sign our appeal on behalf of Picquart; a name like his would have a tremendous effect." But Swann, blending with his ardent conviction as a Jew the diplomatic moderation of a man of the world, whose habits he had too thoroughly acquired to be able to shed them at this late hour, refused to allow Bloch to send the Prince a petition to sign, even on his own initiative. [...] Furthermore, Swann withheld his own name. He considered it too Hebraic not to create a bad effect. (SG 152)

We can also assume, though we are not told, that Swann is afraid of the consequences for his own position in society if his Dreyfusism becomes public. While he is known to be Jewish, his Jewishness has not hitherto been (re)marked, it has not signified as a statement about his relation to his class or to the nation. At this point, then, Swann is still trying to control and contain the signs of his Jewishness.

We might compare this to the way, in Proust's account, some invertedists deliberately allow the signs of their effeminacy to circulate publicly, but in a highly controlled manner. Like Swann and Bloch, invertedists need to make decisions about how they permit their difference to signify: and while the narrator describes the men in the passage below as "extremists" and tempts us to contrast their flamboyance with Swann's reserve, we note that their feminine accoutrements appear only in the interstices of their masculine dress, semaphoring their message rather than spelling it out:
on certain evenings, at another table, there are extremists who allow a bracelet to slip down from beneath a cuff, or sometimes a necklace to gleam in the gap of a collar, who by their persistent stares, their cooings, their laughter, their mutual caresses, oblige a band of students to depart in hot haste, and are served with a civility beneath which indignation smoulders by a waiter who, as on the evenings when he has to serve Dreyfusards, would have the greatest pleasure in summoning the police did he not find profit in pocketing their gratuities.

(SG 26)

Marcel also wishes to claim that Dreyfusism is easier to conceal than inversion, which, in Charlus’s case, is evident despite his considerable efforts to hide it. Marcel asserts that the signs of Charlus’s effeminacy emerge directly and, as it were, irresistibly from the secret of his homosexuality, whereas the secret of one’s political opinions may, in his view, be kept concealed.

If a man believes or disbelieves [. . .] in the innocence of Dreyfus [. . .] and wishes to keep his opinion to himself, you will find nothing in his voice or in his gait that will betray his thoughts. But on hearing M. de Charlus say, in that shrill voice and with that smile and those gestures, "No, I preferred its neighbour, the strawberry-juice," one could say: "Ah, he likes the stronger sex," with [. . .] certainty [. . .]. (SG 497)

Given that it takes Marcel four volumes to realize that Charlus is homosexual, of course, as well as the fact that others remain unaware of his homosexuality, we may ask whether inversion does not actually resemble Dreyfusism in its opacity a good deal more closely than Marcel here allows.

Furthermore, Swann, despite his discretion, does find that he is ultimately unable to contain the (inter)significations of his political opinions and his race, as his Dreyfusism and his Jewishness make each other mutually visible. In the view of his anti-Dreyfusard friends, for a Jew to support Dreyfus is to demonstrate that he belongs to a nationality, a race, indeed a biological type alien to France. Charles Swann has been, as M. de Guermantes says, "almost the only Jew that anyone knew," the token Jew welcomed in the salons, a man whose essential Frenchness
has until now been demonstrated by his ability to master the codes of the Faubourg: to eat the right foods, drink the right wines, collect the right art. In other words, the Duke has believed that to be truly French is to pass satisfactorily as "un homme du monde," specifically a man of the Guermantes' world. And even though this is a world united entirely by personal and familial ties that cross national boundaries—the Guermantes family is partly German—yet in the Duke's logic it is also equivalent to the French nation. René Girard was one of the first to note that this "category confusion" in Remembrance between the social and the national is not, as some critics had claimed, evidence of Proust's own triviality and dilettantism but rather a purposeful strategy, which illuminates, among other things, the parallel function of desire in both social and political life (Girard 224–25). Thus when Swann defends Dreyfus "who, guilty or not, never moved in his world" he betrays a lack of personal loyalty to his class, which is, in this equation, taken as the sign of his lack of political loyalty to France.

It's true that Swann is a Jew. But, until today [...] I have always been foolish enough to believe that a Jew can be a Frenchman, I mean an honourable Jew, a man of the world. Now, Swann was that in every sense of the word. Well, now he forces me to admit that I was mistaken, since he has taken the side of this Dreyfus (who, guilty or not, never moved in his world, whom he wouldn't ever have met) against a society that had adopted him, had treated him as one of its own. There's no question about it, we were all of us prepared to vouch for Swann, I would have answered for his patriotism as for my own. And this is how he repays us! (SG 104–05)

The key phrase in the Duke's speech is, of course, "a society that had adopted him": Swann belongs to the salons not by blood but through an adoption that guards the trace of his irreducible difference even as those around him marvel at the success of his assimilation. He is, precisely, passing; he is enacting a highly successful performance of un homme du monde. But the fine port and the membership in the Jockey Club are revealed as mere disguise, the mask Swann has worn to conceal his more essential racial identity. In the moment that Swann's Jewishness is taken to translate itself into political terms, he falls from grace, having
proved that he always "really" belonged not to society, but to a group known for its intrinsic untrustworthiness. To Swann, supporting Dreyfus is an act of political affinity and moral choice; to his friends, it constitutes the revelation of his true, and treasonous, racial being.

Proust thus uses the Dreyfus Affair, and the reactions of his characters to the Affair, to depict the painful dilemmas of assimilated Jews like Swann, Dreyfus, or his own maternal relatives, apparently accepted into society, in both senses of that word, and yet always under suspicion of treachery. The Affair gives Proust a way to articulate the experience of having one's political and sexual choices attributed to one's pathological being, of being excluded from the national body by virtue of what one is. He counters with a representation of Dreyfusards as a minority subculture constituted only weakly by race, more strongly by political affinity and by their characterization in the anti-Dreyfusard imagination as a secret society of traitors. Furthermore, by superimposing inversion and Dreyfusism, Proust implicitly ties sexual identity to the problems of Jewish national identity, loyalty to the salons, and loyalty to the nation, and defines it as an important social and political issue rather than, or as well as, a physiological condition peculiar to certain unhealthy individuals.

Thus if Jewishness and homosexuality can both, viewed through the optic of race, be identified with blood and located in specific and delimited groups of bodies, both also have another dimension as powerful political vectors with the ability to create mutations in the social bodies through which they pass. Characters in this novel keep finding out that other people are Dreyfusards in the same way that they keep finding out others are inverts; the contagion, as it were, eventually infects almost everybody. And these alterations in political and sexual identity are often effected with the same ease with which any taste or fashion may alter with time. If the Prince de Guermantes converts to Dreyfusism only after a struggle with his conscience, his cousin the Duke, previously strenuously anti-Dreyfusard, simply changes his mind after meeting three attractive Dreyfusardes. His conversion is, moreover, identified as the type of "phenomenon which deserves mention only because it recurs in every important period of history" (SG 188), and its example is invoked in order to suggest that as a man may change his views, so too may a nation:
The Duke had returned to Paris a fanatical Dreyfusard. And of course we do not suggest that the three charming ladies were not, in this instance, messengers of truth. But it is to be observed that, every ten years or so, when we have left a man imbued with a genuine conviction, it so happens that an intelligent couple, or simply a charming lady, comes into his life and after a few months he is won over to the opposite camp. And in this countries respect there are many countries that behave like the sincere man, many which we have left full of hatred for another race and which, six months later, have changed their minds and reversed their alliances. (SG 190)

This theme is emphatically underlined in those portions of the novel set during World War I, when all of the questions about French national identity provoked by the Affair return, with the terms shifted slightly. The Great War brought the two sides in the Affair back together; the nationalist Maurice Barrès attended the funeral of Dreyfusard Jean Jaurès, and the radical/republican government, composed of former Dreyfusards, became fervently nationalistic during the war. As Remembrance progresses through the early 1910s—by which time Dreyfus had finally been exonerated—Proust marks this mutation in political life by showing how the spot marked "traitor," previously occupied by Dreyfusards, is now open for full-time occupation by homosexuals. By the time the narrative reaches World War I, the code word signifying both homosexuality and treason is no longer "Jewish," but "German," and the half-Bavarian Charlus—who was rabidly anti-Dreyfusard—falls under suspicion of being a double agent himself. His German blood, we are told, makes him a liar, "guilefully provocative and arrogantly bellicose" (C 487), and his homosexuality merges with his Germanophilia to designate a traitor. He and his friends are accused of being spies for Germany, and hostile newspaper articles characterize him as "Frau Bosch": "Not only was the Baron’s inversion denounced, but also his alleged Germanic nationality: 'Frau Bosch,' 'Frau von den Bosch' were the names habitually used to designate M. de Charlus" (TR 112).

Numerous other passages in Time Regained reinforce the equation of homosexuality with treason. Depending on the perspective of the speaker, we are told that committing homosexual acts is either just like committing treason, or different from it only in degree, not in kind. "Thus
it was," the narrator writes, "that the former lift-boy at Balbec would now not have accepted for silver or gold propositions which he had come to regard as no less criminal than treasonable proposals from the enemy" (TR 132). And Jupien tells Marcel that Charlus needs to be careful about how he words his propositions:

Only the other day there was a page-boy from a hotel who was absolutely terrified because of all the money the Baron offered him if he would go to his house! [...] The boy, who in fact only cares about women, was reassured when he understood what was wanted of him. Hearing all these promises of money, he had taken the Baron for a spy. And he was greatly relieved when he realised that he was being asked to sell not his country but his body, which is possibly not a more moral thing to do, but less dangerous and in any case easier. (TR 204)

The correspondence between homosexuality and treason is brought most startlingly to light in the scene where, during the war, Marcel stumbles on a male brothel that he takes at first for a den of spies. When he sees a military man who he thinks is Saint-Loup leave the hotel, he thinks,

I recalled involuntarily that [Robert] had—unjustly—been involved in a case of espionage because his name had been found in some letters captured on a German officer. He had, of course, been completely exonerated by the military authorities. But in spite of myself I associated this recollection with what I now saw. Was this hotel being used as a meeting-place of spies? (TR 175)

And indeed, the clients of the brothel all go to great lengths to conceal their identities—though not for the reasons Marcel imagines. But it is Marcel himself who becomes the spy now, passing as a homosexual in order to enter the hotel and spy on homosexuals he thinks are spies so that he can relay this information back to "his" side, the heterosexual side he supposedly shares with the reader.

What Marcel finally observes—or, more accurately, overhears—is the Baron being beaten in a staged scene of sadomasochism. For Marcel,
this sadomasochistic game-playing is a kind of madness, but it also reveals some profound truth about the arbitrary, irrational, and erotic charge underlying nationalist sentiment.

This madman knew, in spite of everything, that he was the victim of a form of madness and during his mad moments he nevertheless was playing a part, since he knew quite well that the young man who was beating him was not more wicked than the little boy who in a game of war is chosen by lot to be "the Prussian," upon whom all the others hurl themselves in a fury of genuine patriotism and pretended hate. (TR 215)

Proust uses this analogy to denaturalize both sexual and national chauvinism, suggesting both that some element of genuine love (the structural equivalent, in the analogy, of "genuine patriotism") informs the most perverse sexual practices, and that there is a purely performative aspect of our attachments to countries as well as lovers. This is one of the most important stakes in Proust's interweaving of homosexuality and the Dreyfus Affair. Amor patria is, obviously, explicitly associated in the novel with sexual love, and sexual love is capricious. The object of both loves is equally arbitrary, and in addition, the qualities ascribed to the object may not really inhere in it: the mistress is not necessarily more beautiful than other women, the nation not more enlightened than other nations.

Charlus is thus the instrument for teaching Marcel two crucial and related lessons about the fungibility of desire and about what, for lack of a better word, we might call "tolerance"—toward Jews, toward homosexuals, toward Germans. It is in passages like the two below that we see the Dreyfusard Proust, partisan of what Zola called "religious tolerance, equal justice for all, the fraternal solidarity of all citizens" (92). Without ceding entirely to moral relativism, this Proust nonetheless insists on the subjectivity ineluctably informing our moral, political, and erotic choices:

My meetings with M. de Charlus, for instance, had they not, even before his pro-German tendencies taught me the same lesson, demonstrated to me, even better than my love for Mme de Guermantes or for Albertine, or Saint-Loup's love for Rachel, the truth of the axiom that matter is indifferent and that anything can be grafted upon it by thought; an axiom
which in the phenomenon, so ill-understood and so needlessly condemned, of sexual inversion is seen to be of even greater scope than in that, in itself so instructive, of love? (TR 320–21)

Finally, to a certain extent, the Germanophilia of M. de Charlus [ . . .] had helped me to free myself for a moment, if not from my Germanophobia, at least from my belief in the pure objectivity of this feeling, had helped to make me think that perhaps what applied to love applied also to hate and that, in the terrible judgment which at this time France passed on Germany—that she was a nation outside the pale of humanity—the most important element was an objectification of feelings as subjective as those which had caused Rachel and Albertine to appear so precious, the one to Saint-Loup and the other to me. What, in fact, made it possible that this perversity was not entirely intrinsic to Germany was that, just as I as an individual had had successive loves and at the end of each one its object had appeared to me valueless, so I had already seen in my country successive hates which had, for example, at one time condemned as traitors—a thousand times worse than the Germans into whose hands they were delivering France—those very Dreyfusards such as Reinach with whom today patriotic Frenchmen were collaborating against a race whose every member was of necessity a liar, a savage beast, a madman [ . . .]. (TR 324–25)

And so by the end of Remembrance, nearly all categories of class, as well as of sexual and political affiliation, have either disintegrated or gone topsy-turvy: most of the characters have turned out to be queer, former Dreyfusards are now patriots, the patriotic Charlus is a traitor. Positions that once seemed radical, whether in political views or sexual style, may be adopted by more and more people, even a majority. In this emphasis on instability and flux we can find something profoundly emancipatory, as Proust embraces—if only momentarily and with his tongue held firmly in his cheek—a vision of a world without prejudice and hence without war:

if the social position of individuals is liable to change (like the fortunes and the alliances and the hatreds of nations), so too
are the most deeply rooted ideas and customs and among them even the idea that you cannot receive anybody who is not chic. Not only does snobbishness change in form, it might one day altogether disappear—like war itself—and radicals and Jews might become members of the Jockey. (TR 393–94)

And, we could add, the perverse might turn out to be normal—if only in a strictly statistical sense.

I include this caveat because I do not wish to claim that Proust wants to move subaltern identities into the place of the "natural," now vacated by both heterosexuality and national chauvinism. Proust's anti-nationalism holds no more brief for the Queer Nation or Zionism than for French xenophobia. It is well known that the Dreyfus Affair precipitated the development of modern Zionism; for some Jews, including Theodor Herzl, the Affair definitively undermined the project of assimilation, leading them to conclude "that a Jew would never be able to live in complete happiness and tranquillity anywhere other than in a Jewish State" (Bredin 529). For others, like Joseph Reinach, Zionism represented an atavistic ethnic solidarity incompatible with the modern nation-state:

> The sole result of this [Zionist] campaign, which in any case is destined for a pitiful failure, would be to give the impression [...] that those Frenchmen who belong to the Jewish faith are subordinating the idea of the fatherland to I cannot imagine what sort of solidarity which existed in a vague way during barbarous times, which was prevalent no doubt at the origin of civilized societies, but which in modern societies is an anachronism. (qtd. in Lewis 260)

But for Proust any notion of "nation" or, as Reinach says, "fatherland," is suspect, as we see in his often-quoted "disclaimer" at the end of "La Race des Tantes": "I have thought it as well to utter here a provisional warning against the lamentable error of proposing (just as people have encouraged a Zionist movement) to create a Sodomist movement and to rebuild Sodom. For, no sooner had they arrived there than the Sodomites would leave the town so as not to have the appearance of belonging to it" (SG 43–44). We must bear in mind that desire in Proust, whether for an individual or for a collectivity, is rarely reciprocal. Whether the object of desire is a woman, a man, high society or the French nation,
no one in Remembrance ever really wants to belong to any club that would have him as a member. Identities, in this novel, are thus necessarily differential and diasporic. As Sedgwick writes, Proust's numinous identification of male homosexuality with a pre-national, premodern dynastic cosmopolitanism, through the figure of Charlus as much as through the Jews, is no more than haunted by the spectre of a sort of gay Zionism or pan-Germanism, a normalizing politics on the nominally ethnic model that would bring homosexual identity itself under the sway of what Nietzsche called "that névrose nationale with which Europe is sick" (177)

that is, nationalism itself. For Proust, the virtue of homosexuals and Jews, under conditions of compulsory heterosexuality, Catholicism, and French patriotism, is that they really are traitors to the nation: they do, in fact, form communities that traverse and sometimes take precedence over national boundaries. The "transcendental homelessness" of Jews and homosexuals is necessary to the constitution of their being as Jews or homosexuals. Make sexual perversion into Sodomism, or Jewishness into Zionism, and we will only have reconstituted an illusory, and potentially oppressive, model of organic wholeness. Indeed, if desire is as fluid and fungible as Proust indicates, then maybe the whole model of the organic national community (like the model of natural and static heterosexuality) has to be dispensed with, having long since outlived its utility and—nearly a century after the first Great War persuaded Proust of its dangers—amply proven its perniciousness.

Notes

1. Although I am using the excellent Moncrieff/Kilmartin/Enright translation of A la recherche du temps perdu that has now been more accurately retitled In Search of Lost Time, I retain a nostalgic preference for the title that seventy-five years of English usage have made familiar as well as euphonious and will refer to the work as a whole as Remembrance.

2. In addition to the foundational works of Hannah Arendt and Eve Sedgwick on this topic, see the articles by Isabelle Ebert and Lynn Wilkinson listed in the works cited.
3. This anxiety goes back much earlier than the nineteenth century; in Renaissance England, for example, sodomites were accused of being spies for France. The nineteenth century, however, brought the full force of its taxonomizing and medicalizing imagination to bear on this ideational complex.

4. Henceforth the following abbreviations will be used for quotations from the volumes of Remembrance: S=Swann’s Way (Vol. I); WBG=Within a Budding Grove (Vol. II); GW=The Guermantes Way (Vol. III); SG=Sodom and Gomorrah (Vol. IV); C=The Captive, The Fugitive (Vol. V); TR=Time Regained (Vol. VI).

5. In his important 1983 work The Affair Jean-Louis Bredin became the first to reprint some, though unfortunately not all, of these extraordinary letters in their scabrous entirety; two representative notes read, "My little green dog, I'm returning to you [various documents]. Farewell, my little Loulou. Your bugger," and "Dear Maximilien, am I still your Alexandrine? When will you come to bugger me? A thousand salutations from the girl who loves you so. Alexandrine" (qtd. in Bredin 49).

6. See the tenth item in the articles of accusation in prosecutor Bexon D’Ormescheville’s indictment.

7. The identity of this agent is still unknown.

8. The complete translation of the document, known as the “canaille de D” or "scoundrel D" letter, is as follows:

   I truly regret not having seen you before my departure. For the rest, I will be back in 8 days. Attached are 12 master plans of Nice which that scoundrel D. gave me in the hope of restoring relations. He claims there was a misunderstanding and that he will do all he can to satisfy you. He says he was stubborn and you don’t begrudge him that. I responded that he was mad and that I did not believe that you wanted to resume relations. Do as you wish. Good bye. I am quite rushed. Alexandrine. Don’t bugger too much! (qtd. in Bredin 50–51)

9. Literally the word means "to stuff." A contemporary copy of one of Panizzardi’s letters transcribed the salutation, "Mon cher bourreur," as "Mon cher bonneur [sic]" (the 'sic' included), indicating that the word was unfamiliar to the copyist, who was therefore unable to decipher Panizzardi’s difficult handwriting accurately. Presumably the word "bougre" would, in contrast, have been known to the copyist or any other sophisticated adult, suggesting that "bourrer" was a fairly heavily encoded term. It is conceivable, then, though unlikely, that some of the military officials who had direct access to these letters did not fully grasp their sexual significance.
10. According to Hichens and Maguire, the two sources for this story, Blacker was neither homosexual himself nor aware of the homosexuality of either of his two close friends until after Wilde was arrested; however improbable this seems, he was not the only person to claim ignorance of Wilde's predilections, and Panizzardi may have been equally adept at passing.

11. For the sake of convenience I will henceforth adopt the more-or-less conventional, though still disputed, practice of distinguishing between the novel's narrator(s) and its protagonist and of referring to the latter as "Marcel."

12. Elizabeth Ladenson, among others, has argued quite persuasively that in Proust's novel all the inverts are men, whereas the only true homosexuals are women; that is, while the dominant model for male queerness is gender inversion, Proust's "Gomorrheans present the novel's sole example of an erotic sensibility grounded in an aesthetics of sameness, and its only template of reciprocated desire" (7). While I agree with the general tenor of Ladenson's argument I believe there are important exceptions on both sides, and so I have not attempted to segregate the terms absolutely rigidly. Instead I will use both "homosexuality" and "inversion" to designate a set of phenomena that Proust himself shows to be immensely diverse in etiology and manifestation in both women and men.

13. Note that when Marcel arranges and watches a sexual encounter between two women for his own edification, he is completely unable to understand the meaning of the sounds of their pleasure, even though he is looking right at them.

14. For a thorough discussion of this question see Ladenson 73–75.

Works Cited


