Chapter 3

The Counterfeiters (1925), Andre Gide, Translated from the French by Dorothy Bussy.

The novelist who betrays too much interest in his own method can never be more than interesting... Les Faux Monnayeurs is among the more interesting of recent works: not among the vital: and greatly as we shall have to admire it as a fabric we cannot praise it unrestrictedly now.

-E.M. Forster, in one of his lectures on the writing style of Gide.

Andre Paul Guillaume Gide, 22 November 1869-19 February 1951, a French novelist, essayist, poet, diarist, and dramatist was born in Paris on November 22, 1896, in a middle-class protestant family. He was the only child of Paul Gide, a Huguenot from Uzes in southern France and a professor of Roman law at the University of Paris and Juliette Rondeaux, a rich heiress of Norman origin. Paul Gide died when Andre was only eleven years old. Gide was raised by his domineering and highly protective mother, who was a strict Calvinist with a catholic background. He attended the Ecole Alsacienne and the Lycee Henri IV in Paris, but frequently required private tutoring at home because of his delicate health. He dedicated himself into learning piano during this time, the influence of which is reflected in his creative productions. He passed his baccalaureate in the year 1889. Due to the isolated conditions in Normandy, where he lived and was not required to earn his own living he focuses on literature; he became a prolific writer at an early age, publishing his first novel, The Notebook of Andre Walter in 1891 and also joined Stephane Mallarme’s circle and is influenced by symbolist aesthetics.

He is recognized for his fiction as well as autobiographical works. Gide exposes to the public view the conflict and eventual reconciliation between the two sides of his personality split apart by a strait-laced education and a
narrow social moralism. His works can be seen as an investigation of freedom and empowerment in the face of moralistic and puritan constraints, and gravities around his continuous efforts to achieve intellectual honesty. His self-exploratory texts reflect his search of how to be fully oneself, even to the point of owning one’s sexual nature, without at the same time betraying one’s values.

In 1893 and 1894 he travelled in northern Africa in an attempt to break away from the stifling Calvinist atmosphere of his house. The exotic locale and surroundings inspired him to pursue previously denied sensual pleasures. Here he realized that he was a bisexual after encounter with a boy prostitute. He befriended Oscar Wilde in Paris and in 1895 they met in Algiers. Here Wilde had the impression that he had introduced Gide to homosexuality, but in fact, Gide was already aware of this. However his early religious training continued to haunt him, and he became obsessed with resolving the struggle between the puritan and the libertine in his nature. In 1895, after his mother’s death, he married his cousin Madeleine Rondeaux, with whom he had been in love since he was thirteen years old. Their attachment was deep and unremitting and Gide described it as “the devotion of my whole life” but the marriage remained unconsummated and it was traumatic for both of them. Christian values often conflicted with Gide’s unconventional lifestyle. Many of his mature works were inspired by the difficulties that he experienced in this relationship. Strait is the Gate and The Immoralist, in particular, portray characters who are carried to destructive extremes of behavior, similar to those Gide saw in himself and in Madeleine. All of Gide’s works are in some way reflections of his emotional struggle, and critics agree that one source of Gide’s genius lay in his ability to translate the contradictions and complexities of his nature into art. The three main works of Gide which describe the conflict in his personality are *The Notebook of Andre Walter, The
Counterfeiters and The Fruits of the Earth. In 1896 he became mayor of La Roque-Baignard, a commune in Normandy. The years between 1901 and 1907 is commonly seen as a period of apathy and disquiet in his life. In 1908, Gide helped found the literary magazine Nouvelle Revue Francaise (The New French Review).

In those years Marc Allegret aged 16 became his lover. He was the son of Elie Allegret who was the best man at Gide’s wedding. Gide adopted Marc and eloped to London, in retribution his wife burned all his correspondence. In 1918 he met Dorothy Bussy, who was his friend for over thirty years and who would translate many of his works into English.

Gide became an inspiration for writers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Albert Camus whose work The Plague is part of this study. In 1923 he published a book on Fyodor Dostoyevsky. When he defended homosexuality in the public edition of Corydon (1924) he received widespread condemnation. He considered this his most important work. In the same year he conceived a daughter, Catherine, with Elisabeth Van Rysselberghe, a much younger woman, who was the daughter of one of his closest woman friend Maria Monnom, the wife of the Belgian neo-impressionist painter Theo Van Rysselberghe. This caused the only crisis in the long standing and intense relationship between the two men. Gide had known Elisabeth since childhood. This was possibly his only sexual liaison with a woman. Gide’s legal wife Madeleine died in 1938. Later he used the background of his unconsummated marriage in his novel Et Nunc Manet in Te. After 1925, he began to demand more humane conditions for criminals. In 1926, he published an autobiography, If it Die (Si le grain ne Meurt).

From July 1926 to May 1927, he travelled through the French Equatorial Africa colony with Marc Allegret. From there he went to Middle Congo and Oubangui-Chari and then briefly to Chad and then to Cameroun before
returning to France. He related his peregrinations in a journal called Travels in the Congo and Return from Chad. In this journal he criticized the behavior of French business interests in the Congo and inspired reform. In particular he criticized the Large Concessions regime i.e. a regime according to which part of the colony was conceded to French companies and where these companies could exploit all of the area’s natural resources, in particular rubber. He related for instance how natives were forced to leave their village for several weeks to collect rubber in the forest, and went as far as comparing their exploitation to slavery. This had a great influence on anti-colonialism movements in France helped to re-evaluate the impact of colonialism.

In 1930 he briefly changed his ideology to communist but became disillusioned after his visit to Soviet Union. His criticism of communism caused him to lose many of his socialist friends, especially when he made a clean break with it in Retour de L’U.R.S.S in 1936. He was also a contributor to The God That Failed. In 1942 Gide went to Africa and lived in Tunis until the end of the World War II. In 1947, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature and an honorary doctorate from the Oxford University. He died on 19th February 1951 and is buried in Cuverville cemetery beside his wife.

The main plot in The Counterfeiters is woven around three characters – Bernard, Edouard, and Olivier. Bernard who is about to appear for his baccalaureate exams stumbles upon love letters addressed to his mother from which he discovers that he is the fruit of a forbidden affair between his mother and a passing lover. This develops in him a deep contempt for the man who raised him but was not his biological father. He resentfully believed that his adoptive father Alberic Profitendieu preferred his other children than him. Bernard wrote a very cruel, ungrateful parting letter and left the house. He took refuge in his friend and classmate Olivier’s house for the night.
Olivier is a shy young man craves for affection from his close friends and his writer uncle Edouard. Edouard a novelist, aspiring to make an impact with his different kind of novel in the literary world is one of the characters who link the story with the various subplots. He drops his clock room ticket to be picked by Bernard, who retrieves the suitcase form the clock room for Edouard. The suitcase provides Bernard with much needed money and Edouard’s diary. The jottings in the diary give Bernard a purpose to his life. He from a letter in the diary reaches the hotel where he finds Laura, a young woman pregnant by Vincent, Olivier’s elder brother, is waiting for help from Edouard, her dependable friend. Bernard makes the best of the contents of the bag and so does Edouard, who without grudge enjoys the adventure of his lost and found bag. He invites Bernard to stay in Switzerland with Laura and also proposes him to be his secretary. Bernard undergoes a conscious understanding of his relationship with Laura and Edouard in contemplation of his relationship with his own family.

Bernard writes an enthusiastic account of his stay in Switzerland to Olivier, which makes the later jealous, who is now seduced by Count Passavant a writer who is trendy, rich and fancies amateur boys but also cynical and manipulative. He coveted Olivier for a while and took his moods to monopolize. Count’s influence on Olivier is pernicious due to which he becomes bad, brutal, and hateful even with his best friends. Finally realizing the dark he falls into a black depression not knowing how to back track. During the evening at the literary club The Argonauts Olivier gets drunk and makes a fool of himself in front of everyone and falls into a drunken stupor. He is caught and is cared for by his uncle Edouard who takes him home for the night. In the morning Edouard discovers that Olivier had tried to commit suicide not out of desperation but rather because he felt so happy the night before that he felt he had nothing more to expect from life. He stays with his
uncle owing to the kindness of his mother Pauline, who believes in good relations linking her half brother and her son. She does not intend to disturb their rapport.

Bernard meanwhile appears for his exams and earns his baccalaureate. He withdraws his services to Edouard but continues to seek his advice on matters of life to which Edouard suggests that he should go back to his family and start taking responsibilities for his own life. In the same manner he also helps Laura to reconcile with her husband.

Edourd is working on a novel which he wants to be enormously appreciated by the critics. To achieve this he intends to write a novel that does not have a subject but is left open for multiple layers of interpretations by the reader. Though he had only started collecting thoughts and notes for his book he had declared its title *The Counterfeiters*. The story does not mention of him completing his work.

The various subplots in the novel are associated with the main three characters by relationship of blood or acquaintance.

Vincent, Olivier’s elder brother, who studied medicine and his family, was looking forward to him becoming a physician, treating patients in a lower room of their house, falls into an adulterous fling with Laure, a married old friend of his uncle Edouard. Vincent takes to gambling and looses the money saved for him by his family to start his medical practice. He eventually abandons Laura when she gets pregnant and sheds all responsibilities leaving with Lady Griffith, a friend of Count Passavant. But becomes more cynical and eventually ends up in Africa.

The youngest brother of Olivier, George does not have cold feet and has turned to crime, handled by an under link of Count Passavant. He helps circulate Counterfeit coins and is member of a boys pride group. He is
inclined to negative activities. Armand, a friend of Olivier’s disillusioned and depressed with his attitude and ideas ultimately finds his way to the cynicism of Count Passavant. Count Passavant wants to publish a review for which he is constantly on the drive to acquire resources and allures young literate, talented boys to contribute and edit the work promising high esteem and perk.

The elders in the novel also have their centre stage. Bernard’s father a magistrate is following a case of counterfeit money in which George is involved. Olivier’s father is torn between his wife, family and mistress. He leaves the situation to his wife Pauline to tackle with it and to hold the family together. The organist La Perouze who looks forward to meeting his grandson Boris is disappointed when he meets him and reconciles with himself in the end of the novel, when Boris kills himself in his presence.

Boris the grandson of the organist is a young fragile child undergoing treatment in a hotel in Saasfee, Switzerland is returned to Paris by Edouard and Bernard, to remove his obsession with Bronja, daughter of his doctor Sophroniska, whom he worships but is also his penchant for masturbation with his friends, considered a shameful and morbid attitude at that time. Boris is desperate, abandoned by Edouard who had committed to care for him, falls victim to the conspiracy of George and his friends and ends up committing an accidental suicide. This extreme dark note brings the novel to an abrupt end.

In the first half of the twentieth century the major figures of French literature were Andre Gide, Marcel Proust and Andre Malraux. Gide’s contributions as a writer and thinker may be divided broadly into two arena: content and form. Not only did he portray and discuss themes with boldness new to the novelistic traditions in Europe, he also expanded the forms and modes in which a narrative could be presented. Throughout his life, Gide sought to explore his morality, both collective and individual. His literary output is quite personal when compared to other major writers. His writings, his fiction
and theatre as well as his diaries are purely autobiographical in nature. They illuminate his effort to express the evolution of his viewpoints on social, psychological and political topics. In his works like Corydon (1924), in which he justifies his homosexuality, Gide defends the individual’s freedom, in the face of conventional societal pressures to conform. In his fiction, characters are constantly exploring their possibilities: sexual, moral and artistic.

Gide’s influence on later generations of French writers, particularly the existentialists and practitioners of the New Novel such as Butor and Robbe-Grillet, stems as much from his narrative or structural, innovation as from his role as a moralist. In this regard he has been compared to James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust. Gide’s contributions revolve around his meditation on the nature of the narrative object; this reflection takes two principal forms in his writing. The first concerns with the question of genres. Gide called The Counterfeiters his only novel, preferring to name his other fictional traits, recits and soties. The use of the latter term, a word which originally referred to a 15th century satiric work, demonstrated Gide’s desire to define precisely his texts, and his refusal to accept the given narrative categories of his day. In fact, he changed the generic designation of some of his works, as he evolved towards more complex forms of fiction. The second concerns a more important form of narrative innovation consisting of the development of the polyphonic novel, in which multiple perspectives are presented. Gide stated in 1910 that; The novel as I recognize it or conceive of it, includes a diversity of points of view…..it is by its very essence a complicated work of art.

The Counterfeiters is a highly moral book with multiple layers, styles and techniques incorporated into one masterpiece. Gide has managed to touch upon various subjects without a single direct reference to it. He had initially planned to produce this novel as a collection of short stories separated into
different sections. The complexity and confusion of the novel is attributed to the number of characters or rather to the number of plots, as the twenty eight characters are necessitated by the multiple plots. Gide has noted most loyally in his “journals for 1928” that his friend Roger Martin du Gard gave him the advice to gather together the various plots of Les faux-monnayeurs, which, had it been not for him would have formed so many separate tales.

A large part of the novel is Gide’s biographical element and his experiences and reflexions incorporated as various characters.

From June 1919 to June 1925 i.e. is during the actual writing of The Counterfeiters Gide kept a separate notebook to record “inch by inch” as he said in English, the progress of his novel. Gide avoided the novel from becoming a single narrative as that would gradually reveal events in which he would act as the observer, an idler, or a perverter. His preference was to have multiple successive interpreters. In May 1924 Gide noted, the poor novelist constructs his characters; he controls them and makes them speak. The true novelist listens to them and watches them function; he eavesdrops on them even before he knows them. It is only according to what he hears them say that he begins to understand who they are.

To weave together the multiple plots and to contain the reader’s thoughts the author is not omniscient so he cannot be omnipresent. One of the causes of the openness achieved by the novel is the sense that the characters are pursuing their lives outside our knowledge. If we are with Bernard in Saasfee then we cannot be Olivier in Corsica. If we have to follow Edouard down a Parisian Boulevard then we cannot keep our eyes on Georges’s disappearing around the corner. Gide intended The Counterfeiters to take place as much as possible in the present tense. What makes all this possible is the role of Edouard, the novelist who is the pin in the pinwheel. At 38 Edouard is younger then the parental generation the settled Profitendieu’s, Molinier’s
and Wedels, about a decade older than the young adults, Vincent, Laura, Douviers, yet still very much in contact with the eighteen year olds Olivier and Barnard.

Edouard is placed at the center of a web of generations and characters. It is he who leads us to La Perouze and thus to Sophroniska, Bronja and little Boris; it is Edouard who bring us to old Azais. It is to Edouard that La Perouze and Oscar Molinier open their souls; Edouard is the stone against which Barnard Hones his intellect; it is Edouard Olivier loves, but Edouard serves another purpose for Gide. It is on him that Gide palms of the traditional philosophies he wished to avoid.

Though Gide wanted to avoid first person narration he ended up doing the same by precisely lending his point of view in Edouard’s journal. The journal is equally essential to bring the setting of the novel to its present; for it is Edouard’s journal that enables Gide to present his background material. It is over Bernard’s shoulder that we read the chapter from Edouard’s journal called Laura’s wedding. Gide was also known to keeping detailed journals, some of which were also published.

*The Counterfeiters* is truly a pluralistic novel offering many distinct voices. Even secondary characters like La Perouze, Rachel, Vedel, and Oscar Molinier have their moment at the stage center; for Gide’s “open universe” is a sphere with infinite number of centers. Through the manner of his story telling he is able to convey his moral convictions directly; that one should put oneself at the disposal of life without prejudices, be it tolerant of others view points, and relish the relativity of the modern world rather than deriding or complaining about it.

Gide has pitched opposites in the young men Bernard and Olivier to make his point of view by showing the effects of separation; influence for a few
months, Gide contrives to have both young men, after completing summer 
courses with their different tutors. In the final part of the novel Gide makes 
both the boys appear for the real life exam where Olivier succumbs to his 
weakness and tries to commit suicide; while Bernard reflects upon his 
mistakes and decides to go back to his family. Gide not only liberates his 
characters to behave as they wish, (i.e. by making the strings by which he 
manipulates them invisibly) he also frees the reader from all types of 
conceptions given by the author.

Gide’s novel is a very slim book with the story of just a few months. Gide has 
sort to abolish the style of his predecessors by removing the background of 
each stage and focusing purely on the characters and their relevance. This 
reduces the length of the novel considerably and thus motivates the readers of 
other genres to complete reading this novel.

Gide learnt to play the piano at an early age and was highly influenced by 
complex compositions. The understanding of which is reflected in his works. 
La Perouze the pianist is an incorporation of this influence in The 
Counterfeiters. Edouard brings his conversation around to music because he 
thinks that the old man would understand his viewpoint better, by comparing 
the depiction of emotions in the drama to the brass instrument in an orchestra. 
The comparison of contemporary and modern music is a style adopted by 
Gide in the dialogues between Edouard and La Perouze.

Gide’s understanding of ‘fugue’ (a form of contrapuntal music writing) has 
also been utilized in writing this novel. He adopted a new way of projecting 
his characters and plots into space, a greatly expanded one. The distance of 
which cannot be visible but all of which can be sensed behind the action, just 
as the story is centered on the Rivedroit but extends as far as San Francisco 
and as far south as Africa. If much of what happens is in shadows or off 
stage, outside the frame, this is because Gide chooses to focus his light only
on the most crucial surfaces. The author commented that his purpose was to study the source of light and not poke a torch into every cranny. This technique rejects the traditional sustained flow, so highly valued by traditional novelists. Gide effectively cuts down on lengthy narration to convey his ideas by using dreams as a form of narration. The angle’s tour that Bernard undergoes is an effective implementation of Gide’s humanist views.

Letters play a major role in *The Counterfeiters*. It has the potential to be reread, to convey different layers of understanding at various stages. Gide has used the letters as the bouncing wall to get different interpretations.

Gide has integrated the scientific, technical and analytical knowledge available during the early part of the 20th century to metaphorize *The Counterfeiters*.

Bernard Profitendieu a young man about to appear for his baccalaureate discovers from a bunch of letters addressed to his mother, that he is not the son of Magistrate Alberic Profitendieu but of an illegitimate alliance of his mother. At the spur of this realization and giving into his adolescent instinct and pride he writes a letter to monsieur Profitendieu with total disregard for the values, feelings bestowed upon him; in a language that is very rude. He leaves his house in the hope of becoming successful in life entirely on his own. His close friend Olivier shelters him for the night. The next morning attempting to meet Olivier, when he reaches the railway station he by chance gets the clock room ticket that Edouard Olivier’s uncle had dropped. Having nothing specific to do, Bernard uses the ticket, to retrieve Edouard’s suitcase from the clock room. Apart from money the most valuable content of the suitcase was Edouard’s journal and Laura’s letter to him.

The reading of Edouard’s journal which apart from being a chronicle of his associations with many of the characters, also has his views and intentions as a novelist. The journal also proved to be the beginning of Bernard’s education
on human relationship, values and the limitations. Laura’s letter and her plight of becoming pregnant and getting disowned by Vincent, elder brother of Olivier, opens a new adventure in his life. Having read Edouard’s journal and the letter Bernard sees an opportunity to kick start his otherwise aimless life. In all good faith Bernard offers himself as secretary to Edouard, the novelist. Following Edouard’s decision to retrieve La Perouze’s grandson Boris from Saasfee, Bernard is taken along with Laura to Saasfee. The interactions with Laura and the discussions with Edouard help him to realize his wrongs and come to terms with them. He realizes with Laura the affection a mother has even for her illegitimate child and due to which he falls into a platonic love for her, which he does not want her to acknowledge.

Bernard’s innocence is visible when he writes to Olivier about his visit and stay with his new found love at Saasfee. The letter becomes an element of jealously for his friend Olivier Molinier. In the novel Gide gives indications of Bernard having homosexual relations, on the night he put up with Olivier and with Edouard during his stay at Saasfee. Towards the end of the novel when he was staying at the Azais Vedel’s boarding school with Sara Vedel, Laura’s younger sister.

Bernard does not deviate from his commitment to appear for his Baccalaureate and continues determined with his studies. On their return from Saasfee Laura is recalled by Felix Douviers, her husband accepting her with her child. Bernard leaves Edouard to join the Azais Vedel School to teach and look after Boris, who he has taken under his care.

In *The Counterfeiters* Bernard is depicted as an adolescent young man on the path following his own light and constantly reviewing his associations and goals and dedicatedly working towards them. Towards the end of the novel we find that he regrets the letter and the language he wrote to his father in the greater light of realization on family, values, feelings, and bond. He also
realizes the truth of the members of the Azais Vedel’s family, which otherwise he had high regard for. The novel concludes with Bernard returning home a much matured and confident young man.

Gide in *The Counterfeiters* stresses on the irrelevance of lineage and lays more importance on upbringing and traditional family values. Pitching opposites like Bernard, the illegitimate son of a magistrate, who takes responsibility for the conduct of his life against Olivier, the legitimate son of a magistrate, Oscar Molinier, who is easily, strays away to temptations by other characters and factors. Gide uses the character of Bernard to portray hope in the contemporary French and the far away England with decaying moral values, religious faith were the new found negatives to lure the youth. Only the strong at the heart and mind can avoid the temptations and survive in the different layers of Vincent’s ocean. Of all the characters in *The Counterfeiters* it is Bernard that Gide enlisted to portray his main idea of courage to introspect and correct his wrong doings, which made him move uphill towards a better life. His fear of making errors is what Gide wishes to highlight as a human limitation which Edouard only gives as a passing advice. Bernard’s leaving the church without singing the pledge was his strength to not commit to a doctrine but a desire to follow the right path.

Olivier Molinier the second son of a magistrate, Oscar Molinier, is the friend of Bernard, and Edouard’s nephew, with a flair to writing poetry, is Gide’s character depicting the counter character to Bernard. Olivier shared a mutual infatuation with Edouard, his mother’s half brother and novelist, with whom he looked forward to becoming an assistant. His life takes a twist when Count Passavant lures him through Vincent to pursue his new venture, a periodical review, of which Olivier is to become the editor. Olivier just out of school finds the offer lucrative and becomes a victim of Passavant. He travels with Passavant to a mountain resort in Corsica, where they indulge in lavish
pleasure and shopping. Olivier gets too much drawn towards the dark scheming opportunity created by Passavant. But his inner soul still longed to be with Edouard.

Olivier’s association with Passavant takes him further away from his friends and family. He nurtures an element of jealousy towards Bernard for his closeness with Edouard. His life takes a counter twist when he gets drunk at the Argonaut and gets into a squabble from which Edouard saves him. Edouard takes along with him, only to discover in the morning that Olivier had tried to kill himself for he thought that he had reached the zenith of his life and there was nothing more he could have wished for.

Gide has portrayed Olivier as the failure of Christian value based upbringing. Pauline Olivier’s mother cared for her children and strived to give them good education for a better future but failed to deliver in her efforts. He did not even bother to visit her when he returned from Corsica. He preferred to live with Passavant. He put in much effort to gather articles and material for the review Passavant was launching. He was using his position as the editor to oblige his friends by reserving space for their inputs. He also tries to oblige them by granting access to the Argonaut party after the dinner was cleared. In the end of the novel, Olivier disassociates from Passavant and becomes Edouard’s secretary and lover. The religious Pauline has no other choice but to give her consent.

Gide’s portrayal of Olivier was the state of young adolescent men who for their innocence and the inability to judge the true intention behind relationships, vested interests became victims of scheming minds and eventually ruined their own future, which being the state of a majority of the bourgeois youth, who had the benefit of being provided for but could not handle their freedom. Gide by pitching Olivier the legitimate son of Oscar Molinier against Bernard proves that upbringing, family values, individuality
and willingness to learn from one’s mistake is more important than just lineage.

Vincent Olivier’s elder brother, a physician by profession is Gide’s representation of the failure of education to incorporate ethical values in spite of acquisition of knowledge. Vincent is his mother’s hope of a son bearing a noble profession and helping people from their illness and misery. She saves for his clinic and even allots a room downstairs to serve as his clinic. But Vincent highly educated gets into an affair with Laura, a married woman and Edouard’s friend and though from the medical profession fails to avoid from getting her pregnant. Vincent also narrates about his knowledge of oceanography and marine biology, demonstrating his understanding of natural survival within the various layers of the ocean. Vincent falls short of comparing this to the human civilization.

Gide uses the above Vincent’s examples to emphasize that an educated person falls victim to gambling and ruins his career. Gide proves that education does not guarantee character building. In due course of time Gide throws him out of the novel to distant Africa.

Sophroniska is Gide’s one more example of the limitations of clinical analysis and treatment procedures. Being a psychiatrist by profession, She is engaged in the treatment of little Boris, who is suffering from a mental state of disorder. Although she claims that she has identified the reasons for his condition, she actually fails to deliver a treatment to help him recover. On the contrary her daughter Bronja to certain extend becomes a hindrance to Boris’s condition. Sophroniska is convinced that Boris is hiding some fundamental guilt and she is using all her insidiously oppressive techniques to force him to confess.
Gide himself was barred from his school for having caught masturbating with his friends. Boris also undergoes a similar turmoil where he bonds with Bronja and indulges in his personal magic. Gide does not bother to mention anything about Sophroniska’s husband or any other family member other than a daughter—Bronja. This leads to a conclusion that Sophroniska may not have explored all the possibilities of Boris’s mental condition and was in a hurry to declare him cured, only supportive of her professional achievement with no consideration of the future consequences of her declaration. Such was the desperateness of the people engaged in the profession of human treatment. Gide also here points out that eventually Bronja also dies, even though her mother is a psychiatrist.

Robert de (Count) Passavant is Gide’s representation of the modern day bourgeois. A counterfeiter to the core, he uses all possible illegal and unethical means for his gain. He has a stake in all kinds of business like bootlegging, counterfeiting coins, gambling and similar vices. He has a scheming mind which he uses as an art to achieve his goals at the cost of others. He lures the teenagers Bernard, Olivier and Armand to collect articles and stories for his review with the promise of good pay and a lifestyle to be proud of. Olivier being his first entice falls victim to his plot and takes off with him to a holiday in the mountains, where he lavishly spends by shopping for things which Olivier fancies. Eventually the temptations lead to the destruction of Olivier. Towards the end of the novel he attempts suicide.

Count Passavant is also responsible for the eventual character disintegration of Vincent, who was to start his medical practice from the savings of his mother, who has high plans for him. Passavant promotes his gambling scheme through Vincent and also introduces him to Lady Griffith. Vincent loses the money saved by his mother and the money given by Passavant in a deal to introduce Vincent’s brother Olivier to work for the review to be
launched. Vincent towards the end of the novel murders Lady Griffith out of the feeling of being cheated and is banished to Africa; this is revealed through Alexander’s letter to Armand.

Passavant employs services of counterfeits like Victor Strouvilhou, who is experienced and resourceful in executing the schemes of Passavant, which lead to events like death of Boris and the Boys Pride Group implementing the circulation of the counterfeit coins.

Gide warns the contemporary world and civilization to be aware of such sophisticated counterfeits, who would not stop or consider the ethical consequences of their means to achieve their gains, Gide also floats the idea of society being victimized by such counterfeits and not being able to reject or avoid them but greedily giving in to their demands. Throughout the novel Gide demonstrates how Passavant raises the temptations from time to time to gain more for him.

Edouard is the novel’s string who links all the various plots together. He is also to a certain extent, Gide’s biographical personality. Edouard is pitched against Passavant. They are both the male novelists presumably of the same age, of similar class backgrounds, with similar sexual preference. This allows Gide a certain amount of light irony in his presentation, Edouard as noble and Passavant as wicked. At the same time Gide uses this polarity to stage his drama of salvation and damnation. Edouard is almost the sole voice of judgment throughout the novel. But Gide loyal to the title of the novel does not spare Edouard and proves him also a counterfeit, since he decides to exclude the fact of Boris’s death.

Gide has initially planned *The Counterfeiters* as a collection of short stories addressing various issues in distinct, delinked plots. But since Gide wanted to address all the core issues such as childhood, adolescence, psychology,
parenting, temptation, professional ethics, crime, politics, religion, sex, social structure, and modern disorder in human civilization. He introduced the character of Edouard, an outsider in Paris, who tries to put things in order but not all his efforts deliver the desired results. Gide ultimately does conclude the novel with a positive note with almost all the turmoil is brought to a calm and normalcy. Edouard is portrayed as the link and reason to connect most of the plots and move them forward. His arrival at the station and dropping the ticket links him to Bernard and Laura, whom he helps to resettle in her marriage with Vincent’s child and by means of employment and sexual preference becomes the mentor and guide, gradually convincing Bernard to reciprocate positively and reconcile with his family from whom he had strongly departed with prejudice.

Although having nothing to do with the counterfeiters coin racket his brief encounter with George’s links that plot with the main plot. Edouard’s main concern for Pauline, his half sister absorbs him into various plots like; 1) helping his ex-lover Laura who was in trouble as his nephew Vincent had a brief encounter at the sanatorium and had got her pregnant. Since Vincent had abandoned her she had written to Edouard for help. Edouard takes Laura and Bernard to Saas-Fee with him, were Laura correspondence with Felix, who accepts her back with the child. 2) Edouard sympathizes with La Perouse his old piano teacher, who is suffering from isolation, old age, and the suppressed craving to unite with his grandson, whom he had never met. Edouard facilitates the reunion but fails to make it pleasant. Gide in this subplot highlights the consequences of letting go of the past and not putting in complete effort to sustain a better future. La Perouse should not have carried guns to the Vedel School, which eventually becomes the instrument by which his own grandson gets killed. 3) Gide has portrayed Edouard’s most positive acquaintance in Bernard, were in spite of their relationship starting on a
negative; as Bernard steels his suitcase from the clock room, Edouard does not harbor a bias. He takes Bernard as his assistant, takes him to Saas-Fee, and advises him to reconcile and return to his family. 4) Edouard’s concern for the Vedel family is woven by his assistance of a loan to Rachel to help meet the financial crises, till the next term, helping her sister Laura and his visit to senior Azais and madam Vedel. 5) He also arranges for La Perouse to stay at Vedel School where Boris is also boarded under the care of Bernard, though eventually this arrangement proves futile. Gide imposes on the reader that Edouard’s concern for all was always positive. But then Gide does not hold back in branding Edouard a counterfeit as Edouard decides to exclude Boris’s death from his upcoming novel. 6) Olivier Edouard’s nephew considered himself a poet of sorts but understood his limitations when he recited some of his poems to Edouard, on the insistence of his father. He thought highly of his uncle Edouard and looked forward to becoming his assistant. Though Edouard was not supportive of his nephew’s involvement and employment with Passavant he did not interfere. But Edouard pulled him out of a drunken brawl at the Argonaut party. He got the shock when Olivier tried to commit suicide due to depression. Here also Edouard plays the role of the helping soul, when he promises Pauline that he will look after Olivier.

Edouard who is a novelist by profession although not having being able to publish any popular or successful work was working on a novel without any plot. He was keen to gather inputs from various sources and sincerely kept notes on issues and contents to work upon. He was looking forward to writing a novel that would make an impact on the reader, provoking his thought process, a novel that would not address a particular issue or concentrate on a particular plot or of the conventional type, but strong enough to leave its impact on the society.
Gide here realizes the fact that such a novel would not deliver society from the path of decay that it had already set upon. Since Gide himself, having failed as a novelist, unable to sell his own published work, here in *The Counterfeiters* portrays Edouard also as a novelist who has not to depict the truth (Boris’s death) so as to make his novel end on a positive note.

*The Counterfeiters* also ends on a positive note, the only difference is Gide portrays the death of Boris and compares it to the crucifixion of Christ as a cleansing ritual.

Gide’s treatment of female character in *The Counterfeiters* is full of criticism, particularly with respect to his theme of freedom. Only once Sophroniska has the independence of a profession but she is only a peripheral character. Rachel Vedel posses “the beautiful women’s nature”, but Gide does not offer any alternatives to her abnegation. One does not need to be a radical feminist that the “women’s nature” of which Rachel is the paragon, is that most likely to be abused by men.

For Gide it would seem that women are good as long as they make good wives and mothers but this goodness is always presented negatively as willful submissiveness. Though there is nothing remotely maternal about Lady Lilian Griffith, at least not since she saw that meat cleaver on the life boat at the age of eighteen and so she is condemned. Whenever a female character acts outside the confines of the social norm she is either condemned or quickly punished. Gide damns Bernard’s mother by ignoring her. Laura’s extramarital affair with Vincent is a disaster which she barely survives, she implies to Bernard that her only alternative is to return to her husband and that she will be doing so “worsted”. Sarah Vedel had the potential to bloom into a female Bernard, for she too is independent and has even better reasons for her rebelliousness than Bernard. Yet Sarah winds up tipsy on Passavant’s lap,
rejected as promiscuous, and is packed off out of the novel, exiled to darkest England.

Gide’s portrayal of Oscar Molinier would please a feminist but his portrayal of Pauline’s superiority to her worthless husband is expressed in her forgiving him, just as Rachel willingly slaves for her feckless parents and Laura goes back to her spouse, whose mediocrity will eventually lead him to think that he is being noble in accepting her back. With the women in the novel, then, freedom and disappointment are not alternative but concomitants. As Gide portrays them the music may be lively but the tune is sad.

All the major characters in *The Counterfeiters* wander through the precincts of the Videl School. It is the Vatican of the novel. Just as Profitendieu, on the trial of crime, is gradually lead back to Strouvilhou, so the story inevitably leads to the school, where the major plot is hatched that brings about the one irreparable event, the death of young Boris. There in his study, old Azais reigns, as though he was God. Azais himself has a certain pleasing innocence that ‘rings true’. But everyone around him must echo back to him his own sound. Systematically Azais acknowledges only the purest good around him, everyday causing the serpent out of ‘paradise’. He is an unbearable burden upon his family and students, who are force to conceal or overlook all that does not jibe with Pastor Azais’s ‘perfect chord’. Their only resort is lying and prevarication that teams around the old gentleman. The yellow ribbon in the button hole of the gang becomes in Azais’s eyes an emblem of a pride group for moral improvement. All his children live under the shadow of guilt, unable to grapple with the ambivalence in their own motivation and impulses. In the Azais boarding school a combat of truth and error are impossible. Evil thrives unchallenged where Strouvilhou has no trouble recruiting his accomplices there. Azais is the representation of hopeless helpless state of
ethics with the incapability to deliver and responsible for creating a healthy pasture for the evil to graze upon.

Strouvilhou is Gide’s representation of the opposite of Azais Vedel. A promiser of the cravings of the material world, recruiting youngsters into illegal means of making fast and easy money with no ethics, makes a living out of it. According to Gide both Strouvilhou and Azais Vedel are counterfeiters in their own respect.

Gide has turned the adults, particularly the father characters into ineffectual clowns. Profitendieu is first presented along with pain in his sides, he can think of nothing in the initial stage, but the warm bath he is looking forward to, before which he will be certain not to take any tea. This is precisely the point; the fathers in The Counterfeiters are nothing but lazy, cramped props of civilization. When he hears the news of Bernard’s departure, presented to him by a servant, whose job it is to maintain the hypocritical normality of the household at all costs. He can do little but wheeze and fall back into an armchair. Molinier is no better because he leaves his mistress’s love letters lying around; his wife needs to help him out by putting them back in his coat. Both these fathers, particularly the more experienced Molinier, subscribes to a legal philosophy that defines justice as that which balances the reputations of wealthy families against the preservation of their own jobs. This particular characteristic makes them no match for the organized evil of Passavant. And so the middle class and its public guardians are exposed as insufficient to fight the damnation threatening the boys. The pathetic weakness and bureaucratic stiffness of these men also makes their value system almost completely irrelevant to anyone who is concerned with authentic life.

The other father figure of any importance is Pastor Vedel. Armand describes him as struck in the role, going through the motions of faith, but too terrified of the consequences that might ensue from inquiring into the bases of this
faith. Along with the hypocrisy and corruption of those upholding the law, Gide draws a parallel with the Pastor perpetuating a false faith and terms all three fathers as Counterfeiters.

Gide addresses a new issue existing during that period where the young people consider themselves equal to the adults. They become aware of themselves as independent entities and were desperate to live separate and also different from their parents. These young people had grown accustomed to the physical changes of puberty and although they are still under the wing of their parents, they are no longer totally controlled by them. They begin to define their own terms for adulthood and their future.

Gide is deeply concerned of this rebel freedom in the earlier years of adolescence, which is often the most exhausting. This seems to be a period when the child’s personality shifts or loosens up. Even an easy going child may become moody and irritable. Young adolescence typically suffers from confusion, conflict, moodiness, outbursts of anger, these happen because in this period they must learn to meet and live with heightened impulses, they must find a balance between desire and constraint; they also have to construct a system of values and moral conduct which is their own. In the sense that it is not a simple copy of what they have been told to believe, but rather a guide to conduct and valuation appropriate to their own circumstances. Due to the increasing independence from parents, the adolescence can no longer accept readymade values that they have received from their parents. Reasons and explanations that may have been sufficient at one time are no longer adequate, as seen in Bernard’s action, when he knows his identity, he cannot control his emotions. He does not want to accept any explanation or reason from his parents, he just leaves the house. But in the end when he experiences Laura’s plight, after being abandoned by Vincent, he realizes the greatness of Felix Douviers in accepting her back with the child this change in the thought
and understanding helps him reconcile with his father and unites him with his family. Gide has portrayed the directions, of the life of the characters, Olivier, Bernard, Laura, Armand and Sarah through his novel.

Gide is highly critical of the Vedel family who from outside represent the school that imparts education with religious and ethical values but a closer look reveals the opposite. The relationship between every member in that family is not harmonious. Both Vedel and madam Vedel do not care about their children. Vedel although head of the family does not earn money. His wife does not care or do anything other than day dreaming. Rachel their daughter struggles to manage the school. Alexsander the eldest son is only interested in borrowing money for gambling. Sarah the youngest likes to have fun and to get attention from men. Armand the youngest son is a strange person in his own opinion.

The love affairs are handled casually by Gide in *The Counterfeiters*. Sex plays a role in the lives of almost all the characters but it is a role neither glamorous nor mysterious. Gide does not intend to make it a source of romance or else his novel might have founded in the embracing honeyed sweetness of Edouard’s love for Olivier. Sex in *The Counterfeiters* merely opens the way for more disruptive, dangerous and perturbing forces. This undercover sexual activity, general though it is, is carefully concealed by everyone. The children would never guess that their parents had ever yielded to erotic impulses, were there not to inform them of what goes on behind the scenes, the secret letters and locked drawers deal to 18th century fiction, which quite naturally find their place in *The Counterfeiters*. The parents in turn pretended not to notice the love affairs of their children. We also find that children of reputed family indulge into crime and visit prostitutes. Oscar Molinier dwells at length on the edifying aspects of his two son’s most
questionable friendship. It is only at the end that Pauline admits her son’s homosexual affair, an indirect and reluctant admission.

The character in *The counterfeiters* are all involved in a web of clandestine love affairs which keep them on the go; Laura’s adultery, Vincent’s liaisons, the brief encounter of the two adolescence Bernard and Sarah; Edouard’s and Passavant’s seduction of Olivier. Edouard attracted by Olivier forgets his love for Laura. Laura disappointed with Edouard marries Douviers and has a liaison with Vincent. Vincent abandons Laura for Lady Griffith; Bernard leaves home when he discovers he is illegitimate.

Gide had openly admitted his sexual preferences of homosexuality and faced much criticism both in public and among literary circles. It was part of his constant effort to fight for recognition of homosexuality that he included it in *The Counterfeiters* and portrayed his characters having a similar preference in their relationships. The novel ends in a rather explosive expression when Edouard towards the end is looking forward to meeting Caloub. Gide has taken special care not to mention the act in direct approach but has adopted the technique of suggestive narration like when “Bernard moves closer to Olivier in bed”, Edouard looking forward to meeting Olivier, Olivier spending time with Passavant, Edouard sharing a bed with Bernard at Saas-Fee. Gide employed this suggestive narration so that readers could conclude for themselves about the persistent homosexuality or outright reject them with absolute ignorance. This style adopted by Gide made it possible for his novel and its readers not deviating from his original story. Almost though the sexual acts of each character is portrayed throughout the novel, nowhere is this subject dominant or taking centre stage.

Known for his fiction and autobiographical works, Gide exposes to public view the conflict and eventual reconciliation between the two sides of his personality, split apart by a straitlaced education and a narrow social
modernism. Gide’s *The Counterfeiters* can be seen as an investigation of freedom and empowerment in the face of moralistic and puritanical constraints and gravitates around his continuous efforts to achieve intellectual honesty. His self exploratory text reflects his search of how to be fully oneself, even to the point of owning one’s sexual preference, without at the same time betraying once values.

Gide does not go too far in drawing inspiration for The *Counterfeiter’s* characters. Bernard and Olivier are inspired from the Biblical brothers Cane and Abel. Gide stresses Bernard’s innocence in Olivier’s jealousy. Innocence in which, we are not necessarily inclined to believe. Bernard should at least have suspected Olivier’s real feelings for Edouard and should have avoided the temptation to show off his new found employer. His innocence is asserted, even so and the fact of his showing off can only increase Edouard’s value to the reader. Bernard is still far from perfect; he is currently a protégé of the almost perfect Edouard. The feeling of jealousy, spite, despair and rage within Olivier is a consequence of the feeling of loss, inferiority to Bernard, is Gide’s representation of these dangers, an outcome of the influence the devil character Passavant.

The Christian tradition is particularly suited to *The Counterfeiters*. It is not simply that scapegoating was a historical Hebrew practice designed to cleanse a community of sin. Christ himself is a scapegoat, “the final scapegoat”, according to the Book of Hebrews, who has taken on the sins of the world. Christian theology thus depends on a transfer of a negative value “sin” into a counterfeit human “Christ” stamped into the womb of his mother by a father, who is in fact the creator of the universe itself.

Though the devil continues to work his wiles in the world we are still saved through our patient faith in the value of this transaction, by our faith in Christ with God’s grace. But Gide has stretched things further by using multiple
characters as Christ like. Edouard the Christ like and Boris the Christ scapegoat. In his last conversation with La Perouze, Edouard recalls of him having told him of a noise coming from the wall near his bed; the noise kept him awake at night but he could not manage to identify it. But after Boris’s suicide, the noise abates. La Perouze’s joy at this new found peace and quiet leads him to a more mystical interpretation that Boris in his self sacrifice has conquered Satan. Boris’s suicide paradoxically allows Gide to end his novel on a positive note. With the forces of Edouard in the transcendent, other characters partially responsible for the suicide, then again Edouard looking forward to meeting Caloub.

The Counterfeiters is Gide’s deliberate avoidance of any kind of analytical statement. Though he forces upon the reader to come to any conclusions even to the extent that when the Christ like savior Edouard is asked for advice by Bernard, he prefers to reply,

I have none to give you. You can only find counsel in yourself; you can only learn how you ought to live by living. It’s a good thing to follow one’s inclination, provided it leads uphill. (pg. 327)

A general overview or a deliberate search within The Counterfeiters proves that the novel suffers from an “absence of view point”, unless it is otherwise upon the reader to conclude that Gide is irritated by a superfluity of view points, which it certainly has. Gide has employed an angel in The Counterfeiters to keep the length of the novel short. The angel takes Bernard and wanders for a long time among tall, sordid houses, inhabited by diseases, prostitution, shame, crime and hunger. Gide suddenly turns into a sentimental sociologist, employing a short cut, an effort to epitomize Bernard’s development through the book and score an easy moral point that Bernard
was beginning to understand that boldness is often achieved at the expense of other people’s happiness.

For Gide conclusiveness is the enemy of freedom which needed change. A virtue practiced too constantly may turn into something else. For Gide it is important for characters like Bernard to keep moving to grow, and development is good only if it is natural, generated from inside. The changes in Bernard arise from within and hence are portrayed as generally positive. The changes in Olivier however are forced upon him by Passavant, abetted by jealousy and self disgust and so they nearly cost him his life. What is wrong with the other characters in the book is wrong for Gide as they don’t change at all, as they adhere to attitudes that limit and pervert their freedom. For Passavant it is his vanity, with Lilian Griffith emotional frigidity, Bernard’s brother has his fascism, Strouvilhou his misanthropy, La Perouze his universal chord, Rachel her endless capacity for self sacrifice, Sarah her deliberate recklessness, Armand his self hatred, Azais and Vedel their moralistic and religious absolutes, Molinier and Profitendieu their propriety and prejudices. These postures arrest development and make those who hold them potentially “counterfeit”. Gide here defines the various confines of the character to indirectly define his version of freedom.

The timing of The Counterfeiters was of great political upheaval and World Wars. A very disturbing scenario for the youth, who themselves were in the process of transformation. Gide is soft on Bernard and guides the reader to sympathize that a person’s personality is not static but can develop and change for the better. In the normal progression to personality adjustment as a mature adult an individual may be more vulnerable to certain influences during some periods of his/her life than during others.

Edouard’s journal is Gide’s instrument of transforming Bernard, acquainting him to lives of other people their problems as humans from childhood to
adulthood specifically making him realize his wrong views about his parents because it is written there that

anybody may make a false start; the important thing is not to persists in. (pg. 199)

In continuation with the appeal that Gide makes in *The Counterfeiters* to the reader to go soft on Bernard, in the letter to Olivier he declares his love for Laura which is not lust but real love. Bernard admits to Laura during a conversation: and now I find that when I am with you I have no desire (pg. 182).

The fact is that the concept of love changes from lust as Bernard moves on. However Laura never considers Bernard as a lover. She treats him like her brother.

Gide takes up the cause of pointing out that being an illegitimate child does not make a person bad. The possibility of either parent being unfair may not be the only reason but a multitude of circumstances, for after Bernard meets Laura, his idea about an illegitimate child is changed finally helping him reconcile with his own birth.

“For my part I believe one can. And on the contrary, I don’t believe in what people call so foolishly ‘the blood speaking’. I believe this idea that the blood speaks is a myth. I have read somewhere that among certain tribes of South Sea Islanders, it is the custom to adopt other people’s children, and these adopted children are often preferred to the others” (pg.184).

Bernard is enlightened by his experience with the Vedel family. He thinks that the Vedel’s do not give enough attention and love to their children and have strange personalities. It makes him realize that his own family is better
and he is lucky as both his parents give enough attention and love to their children.

The Profitendieu family which Gide describes in *The Counterfeiters* is the major obstacle for Bernard the adolescent on his road to fulfillment. As an adolescent who considers himself equal to an adult, usually will have certain differences of opinion than those of his parents and they become cause for a conflict, his immediate conclusion would be that his parents failed to understand him or consider his opinion. The urge to break free from the domain of parents and become independent is strong. An adolescent takes this step and chooses the option to learn on his own to survive than from his parents the ways of life or maybe ventures out to prove his point of view to himself and his parents. Few of such rebels muster up courage and return to reconcile with the family.

Although *The Counterfeiters* lacks in a ‘specific subject’, the message Gide wants to convey to his readers is not unclear. The traditional values woven with religious faith and sentiment has to now made way for rational and intelligent understanding in all walks of life, for the human civilization to co-exist in harmony, the constant struggle between Azais’s world and Strouvilhou’s unethical ambitions, nurtured by Passavant’s evil grandeur has to clash and perish to sustain a more peaceful, free society, where religion is also made accountable.

Gide had the opportunity to learn music and play a piano at an early age. This gave him a deep understanding of the art of music, its effects, techniques and complex music compositions.

In the final chapter of the first part of the novel Edouard visits his old piano teacher La Perouze. The two have a disagreeable conversation in which music functions as a metaphor for the conflict of values, which is the overall theme.
of the novel. During his second visit to La Perouze, the old man tells Edouard about attending a performance of Victor Hugo’s romantic drama Hernani. La Perouze is indignant that children should be allowed to see such plays and that the state should subsidize a theater that presents it. Amused by these misplaced scruples; Edouard points out that there could be no drama without the passion. To this La Perouze gives the Calvinist retort that a “Portrayal of the passion must necessarily be an undesirable example.” It is Edouard who brings the conversation around the music, which he believes the old man will better understand, by comparing the dramas depiction of the emotions to “the effect of letting loose the brass instruments in an orchestra”.

Edouard tries to convince the old man to come out of his past, the memories of his dead brother, the letters he keeps rereading, of which Madam Perouze had complained to Edouard. Edouard’s attempt to convince La Perouze to change, met with strong opposition and he complains about modernism,

\[
\text{why do you want to make me admire what disturbs me?----- Have you observed that the whole effect of modern music is to make bearable, and even agreeable, certain harmonies which we used to consider discords? (pg.148 )}
\]

The change which La Perouze refers to as ‘discords’ is equated to sin:

\[
\text{sensibility is blunted; purity is tarnished; reactions are less vivid; one tolerates one accepts…. (pg.149) }
\]

Edouard observes that if music were restricted to the mere expression of serenity a single chord would do, one perfect and continuous chord. His failure to convince La Perouze to give up on some of his beliefs against change for good makes him take up the responsibility of bringing Boris to meet him. Hopeful that maybe it will put an end to the old man’s despair.
In technical sense though the opposite of the single continuous harmony is not dissonance but polyphony, perhaps this is why when he comes to state the theory of his novel, Edouard talks about fugues;

what I should like to do is something like the art of fugue writing. And I can’t see why what was possible in music should be impossible in literature. (pg 171 )

A fugue is a form of contrapuntal music written in from two to as many as six voices. Fugues may be written for single instruments, combination of instruments or for singers. The parts in which fugues are composed are called voices because they correspond to those of vocal music; soprano, alto, bass. The complexity of the fugue makes some of them intellectual exercises; however in the hands of master composer a fugue provides an emotional roller costar ride that generates tremendous power. The psycho analyst is of the opinion that polyphonic music is mathematical. But Edouard defends the art of the fugue as admirable. Drawing a clear divide of the perspective of characters limited to their understanding of other works and creativity.

Gide has “composed” The Counterfeiters in the format of a fugue, to understand this we need to know that fugues are conventionally written in ternary form, with an exposition, development and conclusion. The Counterfeiters is also divided into three carefully balanced sections and it is easy to see the first as an exposition of characters and themes, the second comprising a development section; as Olivier and Bernard go off for the summer to be enhanced or to further deteriorate and the third furnishing the novels conclusion or denouncement.

We can be even more precise as the exposition section of the fugue begins with the statement of the principal theme in one voice and in the dominant key of the composition. In The Counterfeiters the initial subject is Bernard whose departure from home announces the liberation theme and sets the
upbeat key of the novel. In a fugue the subsequent theme is sometimes termed ‘the answer’; this is presented by a second voice and a second key. In this would be Olivier to whom Bernard goes upon leaving his home. In the fugue while the answer is being delivered the first voice states the counter subject. In the novel this would be the tangle of Vincent, Passavant, Lady Griffith and Laura or it could be Edouard’s struggle to turn life into art. After stating its subjects the fugue rapidly progresses into complexity, as to the number of characters and their complicated relations in part one of the novel.

The fugues development section works out variations of the already stated themes in a series of, what are termed as episodes. The novel thickens and the character of Bernard and Olivier undergo development through their experiences in Switzerland and Corsica respectively. As the fugue progresses, entire sections of new materials can be introduced. As an example we find Sophroniska, Boris and Bronja enter the novel.

The conclusion of the fugue is also a recapitulation in which it returns to the original key as the novel returns to Paris. Here the principal theme and other material from the exposition are repeated, although not precisely in their original form. The subject and counter subject may overlap, just as the transformed Bernard and the transmogrified Olivier each other in the examination scene. The fugue ends with a climax in which the musical thought of the whole piece is driven home like a sound argument, the death of Boris. *The Counterfeiters* is a genuine polyphony, an organized confusion, like innumerable singers and instruments of a musical composition.

An argument can take many forms to convince, persuade or to deliberate. Gide while planning this novel wanted to avoid direct confrontations between his characters in crucial situations which otherwise would have become unavoidable. In *The Counterfeiters* he has used the ‘letter’ as the most effective tool, especially the breakup letter that Bernard wrote to his father. It
is the state of the original paper in which the control of the writer ensures the effectiveness of the argument. Letters hidden, discovered, missing, stolen are all short cuts adopted by Gide to avoid unwarranted pages of irrelevant background information to the extent that Armand picks one page from Alexander’s multipage letter for Olivier to read. Though narrow is the application of this technique, Gide has used it to his advantage by his skill to kill many birds with one stone. The letter has the potential to be read, reread and passed on, reflected upon, under changing circumstances. A more detailed study reveals the risk in letter writer; and a more detailed analysis makes it possible for the recipient to learn much after contemplation and interpretation being the final custodian of the letter.

Bernard’s parting letter reflects his feelings, language, state of mind, psychological behavior and covers up his entire background without the possibility of any counter arguments. But in Saasfee after his interaction with Laura he regrets upon the contents of the very same letter. A young man never cease to proclaim superior to his father, in that he leaves his room a child, made reflections, displaced intervenes in the bounds of marital relationship, doubts as to the parentage of his little brother.

Gide has used his knowledge of other disciplines to make his story more effective. In *The Counterfeiters* he has not assigned readymade roles of the characters, to be assumed by the readers. At the beginning of the novel Vincent tells Lady Griffith about the surprising discoveries made in Marine Biology and Ocean Sciences, concerning deep sea organisms. He believes that these organisms have been presumed to be blind but it was found that almost all had eyes, hence termed creatures of darkness.

Why eyes with no means of seeing?... and at last it was discovered that each of these creatures which people first insisted were creatures of darkness, gives forth and projects before and around it its own light. (Page 09)
Bernard is a character who learns to trust his own light once he contemplated on his acts, but no conclusion can be drawn as to what Olivier should do, for to his marine story Vincent adds another. Each species of ocean fish survives only in waters containing specific concentration of salt, varying with the species. They move in layers. When an individual fish moves too far up or too far down it weakens and becomes easy prey for alien a fish, to each therefore his own dosage of good and evil. This example of Gide’s accommodates an inexhaustible number of connected images and themes with many variations.

Gide did not wish to raise the religious denominational issues in The Counterfeiters, so he polarized the story around Pastor Azais’s boarding school, which he treated as the Vatican of the novel. Gide uses this school to portray religion, education and its effect, on its students. Pauline sends her sons to the Vedel School thinking highly of the religious morals she believes would be inculcated in her sons. Edouard believes that the Vedel’s was the right place to board and educate Boris. This is also the institute where Strouvilhou seeks his criminal aspirants, a trait which the Azais who having rigid religious views refuses to acknowledge; instead he praises the group with the yellow ribbon in their button hole.

Gide here has made an attempt to pull the reader from under the cloud of blind religious extremes to seek their own light with belief in themselves. Edouard advices Bernard to seek his own life and if Bernard happens to make mistakes then it is part of learning contrary to the philosophy of sin, guilt and repentance. Gide draws a fragile line between religion followed blindly and living life consciously. It is the acts of his characters that Gide expects the readers to judge as right or wrong in the light of individual perception. Boris the grandson of La Perouze is introduced with a state of neurotic disorder, undergoing treatment from a psychiatrist Sophroniska who applies all her
clinical qualification and modern methods of analysis and treatment to treat him. Gide here strongly opposes her declaration of a cured Boris towards the end of the novel. Edouard questions the techniques and conclusions that Sophroniska has narrowed down for the treatment of Boris. Gide here doubts the efficiency and the methods used for psycho analysis and treatment, which even today is a lesser known territory, for the medical fraternity. It is only towards the end of the novel that the fragileness of Boris and his longing to associate with others, overlooking his past and the death of Bronja that we realize that the psychiatric cure was incomplete. Rather it was not called for at all. Since masturbation was considered a taboo by the contemporary society, Boris joined the strong mens group only to acquire a sense of identity by which he tried to keep himself away from his grandfather.

Gide did not go against the Christian tradition but he followed the historical Hebrew practice of cleansing a community of sin. Christ himself, a scape goat, who had taken over the sins of the world. As per the Christian theology the sins can be transferred on a counterfeit human “Christ”, stamped in the womb of his mother by a father who is in fact the creator of the universe itself. Though the devil continues his work and wiles in the world, we are still saved by the patient faith in the valley of this transition, by our faith in Christ and His grace. *The Counterfeiters* has a Christ figure in it. Though Edouard is the Christ like figure in many ways the real “lamb” is Boris. Gide has only two little children in his novel Boris and Bronja. By the end they are both dead. Boris suicide saves a number of sinners and manages to put the family back in order. The hypocritical and oppressive Vedel Azais School is discredited and many boys go home. Gheridanisol and his realm are also discredited and lose their hold. Armand has decided to help his family by working at the school which would keep him away from Passavant and perhaps his cynicism and will inject little authenticity in to the Vedel faith.
Bernard also returned to his father, which according to Edouard was the best thing to do. The noise La Perouze heard near the wall had ceased giving him new found peace. The final image of the novel is of Gide’s sacrifice of the “lamb” that brought his wayward characters back into harmony.

Adolescent is the period or stage of development between childhood and adulthood, a phase of turmoil, if understood unconscientiously. The earlier 20th century had its limitations of scientific research on the reason that triggered this behavior. Still the traditional understanding of this morphosis was also not wrong.

The individual identity of a person continues to modify throughout the life but it is during adolescences that the past crises and resolutions are shaken into a new configuration. The various aspect of an adolescent comes into focus over a period of six to seven years; the sexual life, a sense of confidence or doubt, work or career goals, personal ideological values, feeling of recognition or isolation. The choices and decisions of an individual profoundly affect the rest of his life as to his adulthood, middle age, and old age as portrayed by Gide in Bernard and Olivier. The physical development of an individual adolescence period begins at the time that he or she shows the first sign of making the transition to sexual maturity and ends with physical growth that almost ceases around the end of their teens. This period is dominated by the biological need and the social response at the beginning with the increase in the interest in the opposite sex that usually accompanies sexual maturity and ending with the attainment of social and financial independence from the parents.

Gide also portrays the responsibility of the parents and the society as a whole in understanding and supporting the adolescent during this sensitive age period. The negative, the positive and the corrective are influential forces that are at its maximum during this phase. Since each human passes through this
stage in his or her life and is aware of the good and the evil, that is the outcome, the general formation of a responsible society depends on how these budding youngsters are nurtured with positive guidance.

In *The Counterfeiters* Gide used the technological development to symbolize his theme and title. He makes a point during his take at scientific and technical developments during the earlier 20th century, where the negative outcome was also equally prevalent along with the popular and positive quest. The counterfeit coin that Bernard brings to Edouard’s notice, being as good as the original in resemblance, is Gide’s observation of the improving quality of counterfeit and strouvilhou having bulk quantities of these counterfeits and the strategies developed to put them into circulation is also similar to the strategies adopted by Hitler to weaken other nations.

Similar to the other novel in this study a brief reference to the treatment of tuberculosis is also found in *The Counterfeiters* setting a stage for the acquaintance of the aspiring medical doctor Vincent Molinier, the already married Laura and her husband Douviers. Gide specifically points out the pregnancy of Laura, as a result of a qualified medical student not taking necessary precaution to avoid it.

Gide portrays the same Vincent giving high discourse on scientific knowledge about Marine Biology and Ocean Sciences, shedding light on misconceptions of the conventional knowledge by pitching scientific conclusion and facts. This allows the reader to doubt and question the real purpose of systematic, scientific education and its benefits, as Gide eventually banishes Vincent, too far away Africa as he is no more of any value to the civilized world.

Gide makes a direct attempt of the scientific community to foresee the long term consequences of their indulgence with time tested conventional
methods. The attitude adopted to outright reject the prevailing practices in the light of new methods had undesirable consequences. Sophroniska’s understanding of Boris’s secret, were she is convinced that Boris is hiding some fundamental guilt and tries using all her insidious oppressive techniques to force him to confess. Which we later come to understand was his indulgence in masturbation, which his group of boys termed as ‘magic at school’. Masturbation was considered a taboo then which is now understood as a psychological indulgence of the puberty. Edouard sees no reason of her weighing so heavily on the child and is also not sure if Sophroniska is actually not projecting the guilt on to him. In today’s perspective if we look at a female psychiatrist treating a boy at puberty, coming to terms with the change, he is physically under going, where he has the daughter of the psycho analyst, who is also of the same age, as his companion providing the prelude.

Gide questions Sophroniska’s declaration of the curing of Boris, which we learn had only changed the stage for Boris as his isolation was further deepened when the talisman with which he associated resurfaced at the Vedel School, which made him an easy prey to Gheridanisol and his gang of boys.

When World War II broke out, it seemed that western civilization which had been dealt a heavy blow by World War I, was disintegrating completely. This disintegration was especially conspicuous to someone like Gide, who had reached maturity before World War I. Gide spoke of,

the atrocities of War….. that vast upsetting of all the values constituted our reasons for living (pg. 31).

Civilization was in retreat, it doubted its own religion, values, virtues and social structure. Though The Counterfeiters does not make much reference to the industrial revolution, Gide does acknowledge the large scale destruction and disturbance that the modern warfare was indulged in; society had lost its touch with the past. The modern world according to Gide had become an
inhospitable environment for culture and was heading faster into a world were culture was to be denied, neglected and made fun of. Gide had become a champion of civilization of tradition of humanistic values as he had seen and experienced life both before and after War, and also very closely observed and analyzed the specific factors leading to the man made self disintegration of civilization and progressing towards an abyss.

The four families the Molinier, the Profitendieu, the Vedel and Passavant are the most actively involved in the story, having in common is their connection with liberal professions. They are magistrates, professors, pastors, writers iconic of the traditional civilized world. But have allowed the devil to creep in with his hypocrisy, greed and unethical means of extending their insincerity into the modern world. Were on the fringes the aristocratic Passavant and the politically inclined Admantis suggest further upper middle class connections with their new redefinitions of the modern western set of values and ethics quite contrary to what Gide otherwise supported.

Gide takes up the cause of pointing out that being an illegitimate child does not make a person bad. The possibility of either parent being unfair may not be the only reason but a multitude of circumstances, for after Bernard meets Laura, his idea about an illegitimate child is changed finally helping him reconcile with his own birth.

For my part I believe one can. And on the contrary, I don’t believe in what people call so foolishly ‘the blood speaking’. I believe this idea that the blood speaks is a myth. I have read somewhere that among certain tribes of South Sea Islanders, it is the custom to adopt other people’s children, and these adopted children are often preferred to the others (pg.184).

Bernard is enlightened by his experience with the Vedel family. He thinks that they did not give enough attention and love to their children and hence
have strange personalities. It makes him realize that his own family is better and he is lucky as both his parents give enough attention and love to their children.

The Profitendieu family which Gide describes in *The Counterfeiters* is the major obstacle for Bernard the adolescent on his road to fulfillment. As an adolescent who considers himself equal to an adult, usually will have certain differences of opinion than those of his parents and they become cause for a conflict, his immediate conclusion would be that his parents failed to understand him or consider his opinion. The urge to break free from the domain of parents and become independent is strong. An adolescent takes this step and chooses the option to learn on his own to survive than from his parents the ways of life or maybe ventures out to prove his point of view to himself and his parents. Few of such rebels muster up courage and return to reconcile with the family.

Although *The Counterfeiters* lacks in a ‘specific subject’, the message Gide wants to convey to his readers is not unclear. The traditional values woven with religious faith and sentiment has to now make way for rational and intelligent understanding in all walks of life, for the human civilization to co-exist in harmony, the constant struggle between Azais’s world and Strouvilhou’s unethical ambitions, nurtured by Passavant’s evil grandeur has to clash and perish to sustain a more peaceful, free society, where religion is also made accountable.

**Conclusion:**

Gide in *The Counterfeiters* points out the even in the old fashioned sense there are both good and bad characters, in general things work out good for the good and badly for the bad, as a moralist with a particular concern for the
young, Gide is careful to show how his youth go right or wrong and one way of going wrong is to ignore one’s own desires.

There is no difference between the goals of any basic religion and in the desire to seek God, truth or even one’s own happiness, for no religion guarantees the same. When Edouard advises Bernard about how to conduct his life,

The answer is very simple, that is to find the rule within oneself, to have for goal the development of oneself.” But when Bernard worries about making mistakes, Edouard replies “That in itself will teach you. It’s a good thing to follow one’s inclination, provided it leads uphill (Pg. 327).

The uphill is symbolic of high moral values and towards God.

Not only has Gide liberated all his characters to behave as they wish (that is within the strings by which he manipulates them) he also frees the reader. By just briefly portraying the characters and almost eliminating the background, Gide puts on the hat of a tour conductor briefly introducing the reader to the various sights and leaving it to the reader do all the exploration and discover that is worthwhile for him. Gide has also let his characters go on with their lives without directly linking one with the other, the parallel lives of all the characters leaves much for the readers to imagine and venture both during the journey, as well as outside the novel.

The inclusion of almost all age groups of characters is a very selective and planned representation of the French Brogues society, the problems of the youth, the attitude of both the magistrates, the hypocrisy of the Vedal school, the hopelessness of the old man, the confusion of the children, the influence of evil Passavit, Lilian, and Strovihallou, and last of all Edouard himself who does not want to include the truth of Borris’s death in his novel.
Although *The Counterfeiters* seems to not have a definable ‘subject’ or suffers from the ‘absence of view point’, it can be seen as an elaborate exploration of the causes of the death of little Boris, a string of small conventional plots converging to their logical objective. The author has used his characters to represent the contemporary social, religious and political state of France with a glimpse of England, Switzerland, Africa and America.

Since Gide was termed a moralist among the immoralists he in *The Counterfeiters* rings a warning bell for the society as a whole and the youth in particular, for in them he saw the pure future of the civilization. Through small length of the novel, he used a narrative technique to incorporate techniques of letter, dream, journal and scientific and religious metaphor; to deliver sensitive subjects of parenting, religious values, sexual intimacy, ethics, specifically drawing the reader’s attention to the multiple events that lead to a consequence; and the mistakes of concluding that for a event to occur only one cause is responsible.

The optimistic Gide concludes stating the example of Bernard who rebels against his own rebellion, winding up a long way from the classically heroic image of himself, to the more mature and self realized to corrects his mistake by deciding to return to his family.

Then the angel took Bernard into the poor quarters of the town, whose wretchedness Bernard had never suspected. Evening was falling. They wandered for a long time among tall, sordid houses, inhabited by disease, prostitution, shame, crime and hunger. It was only then that Bernard took the angel’s hand, and the angel turned aside to weep. (pg.306)

Gide has suddenly turned into a sentimental sociologist, his use of abstract nouns and the absence of humans shows his lack of knowledge of genuine sympathy, a reflection of his upper middle class upbringing a fact of the
brogues culture. From *The Counterfeiters* Gide eliminates the peripheral characters who are outsiders and do not belong to this class, Laura, Felix, Sarah, Lilian, Armand, Sophroniska, Bronja and Boris who is made the symbolic sacrificial lamb. The sacrifice helped put the disturbed plots on all the stages back to order, towards the end of the novel. Almost like how by the crucifixion of Christ cleansed the entire humanity of sins, but failed to eradicate sin itself.

Gide became an inspiration for writers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Albert Camus whose work *The Plague* is part of this study, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in the year 1957. *The Plague* written shortly after the World War II is essentially an allegory for the situation in France and other parts of Europe during the time of the German occupation. *The Plague* is an undeniable part of life, it is omnipresent. Camus questions the meaning of the moral concepts justifying humanity and human suffering within an ethical framework.