Towards a Queer Ecology
Science and Nature in *Un ruban noir* (Vincent Borel, 1995)

1 The question of homosexuality, in France as elsewhere, has a close and complicated relationship with questions of nature. Questions of a biological origin, or lack thereof, for homosexuality draw on and overlap with discussions of the science of nature, biology broadly speaking, and of science in general. The interaction of ideas of nature with ideas of normativity has led to an elaborate history, now as ever a source of debate among sexuality studies scholars. In other words, it becomes hard ultimately to separate the status of sexuality, in terms of its role as an aspect of humans *qua* living things, from the problem of how science is understood in culture. The various ways in which we might characterize, incorporate, critique, or reject scientific ideas will necessarily interact with similar decisions taken with regard to the narrower question of homosexuality.

2 It might seem commonplace to investigate cultural attitudes towards science in the AIDS novel, a genre in which medically-contextualized living organisms are the agents, site, and prize of a struggle. However, the roots of that struggle predate the gay men’s AIDS pandemic and its relatively short historical reach. AIDS narratives have arisen with a discursive background of queer struggles with science. It is fairly well known, for instance, that in the foundational thought of Guy Hocquenghem, as expounded most notably in his 1973 treatise *Le Désir homosexuel*, a rejection of the idea of a natural basis for any sexuality went hand in hand with a general rejection of the scientific and medical establishment, both social institutions having long been oppressive and homophobic. Never mind that biology is a procedural, methodological science, whereas nature is a much wider and looser concept with a longer history: discourses of biology and medicine are the institutional tools by which oppressive discourses of nature would constrain sexuality.

3 Historically, queer theory in English has shown a very strong penchant for social constructionist views of sexuality, along with a tendency to figure sexuality as being outside nature. This fact is traceable to the generally anti-science stance of key texts on sexuality originating from France in the 1970s and popularized mostly in translation, among which I would include the works of Foucault and especially his celebrated volume *La Volonté de savoir* (1976).

4 Unsurprisingly, the same perspective generally holds sway in France itself, even though post-Foucauldian queer theory has only relatively recently become popular there. In addition to Hocquenghem’s resolutely non-biological, non-natural, and even to some extent non-bodily sexuality theory, Monique Wittig’s classic works of materialist lesbian feminism launch implacable attacks on the role that biology and science have played in constructing sex, as well as gender. According to Wittig, we have the combined discourses of biology and of nature to thank for a divided, hence oppressive society.

5 If anything the arrival of queer theory in France has only strengthened this general attitude. In 1998 Catherine Deschamps, a pioneer of queer theory in France, specified that for her the term “queer” is non-essentialist. She thus employs a familiar term used to describe theory opposed to any kind of physical or biological basis for sexuality. Later, in 2007, according to Denis Provencher (after Maxime Foerster, 2002), “in contemporary France a sense of biological and symbolic gender differences determ-
ine[s] French models of heteronormativity\textsuperscript{11}. It is not hard to find the situation given in similar terms more recently. Daniel Borrillo, for example, describes natural order as being both “[un] discours fondé sur un principe immuable (le biologique) et permettant la perpétuation d’une Métaphysique de la différence des sexes”\textsuperscript{12}. Borrillo perceives interpretation of human nature based on biological sex as part of an inherently homophobic discourse, ending a piece on regressive family legislation in France by pointing out its true aim: to defend “l’ordre symbolique de la différence des sexes, autrement dit, la suprématie de l’hétérosexualité”\textsuperscript{13} — a remarkable echo of Provencher, and no great change, it seems, from Hocquenghem and Wittig. It would appear, then, that there was hardly a way to understand biology as an interpretable practice, rather than a code of cultural law; and certainly very little patience within queer French discourse for imagining a reconciliation between homosexuality and nature.

6 What I would like to do here is to discuss how a particular AIDS novel expresses a fundamentally different worldview of nature, and the science of nature, in contrast with the prevailing attitudes of most French sexual activist culture. *Un ruban noir* (1995), by Vincent Borel\textsuperscript{14}, might be characterized variously as an AIDS novel, a party and drugs novel, or both. Alain-Philippe Durand refers to it in passing as part of a subcorpus of electronic music novels that have a “sociological aim”\textsuperscript{15}. These novels’ choice of milieu would become a means of exploring different social problems, AIDS in Borel’s case. It is reasonable to describe *Un ruban noir*, then, as a novel with a social consciousness as well as a “gay signature”, to use Heathcote, Hughes and Williams’s phrase\textsuperscript{16}. The work is intimately concerned with the culture of gay men exactly when political questions surrounding their identity had become a matter of public and painful urgency: the conditions of gay legitimacy, never mind queer legitimacy, were still in flux\textsuperscript{17}. Indeed, it is “an openly polemical work, protesting against the characterization of AIDS in society and the media […] the way in which AIDS has been associated with gay lifestyles”\textsuperscript{18}. In addition to these affiliations, I would like to propose that it constitutes a piece of queer ecologist fiction. Implicit in that description is that the novel not only adopts a generally positive view towards nature, figured broadly and perhaps chiefly aesthetically, but also allies itself with science, relying heavily on metaphors invoking science but also portraying many specific types of science in a positive light.

7 The wider interest here is in comparing such a science-positive approach, and its extension into queer ecology, with the generally hostile attitude of sexuality theory in France. This positive attitude within the novel, which draws partly on the Gaia hypothesis\textsuperscript{19}, stands in tandem with and in contrast to a deep suspicion of the pharmaceutical industry and to a degree of technology, both of which are also highlighted within the work. At the same time, the novel seems to retain certain ideological problems of nature discourse concerning gender, as distinct from sexuality. The novel’s characterization of the cyborg has certain affinities with that of much older quasi-scientific discourse of sexualized technologies, notably Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s misogynist novel *L’Ève future* (1886)\textsuperscript{20}.

8 *Un ruban noir*’s narrator and protagonist, André, is a nurse at the Bichat hospital in the spring of 1988 and confides his seropositive status to his friend and confidant Le Doc, a medical resident and would-be virologist. Such characters allow not only for a frontline perspective on the epidemic, but also potentially a reflection on what the practices of medicine and the body, and what we have been taught about medicine and
the body, might actually mean, given that this is a modern novel about two educated urban friends who share an unglamorous workplace. Andre’s initial reaction, however, is neither scientific nor reflective. Distraught at his diagnosis, he leaves Paris, of whose gay scene he has tired anyway, for Barcelona, whereupon he indulges in a drug-fuelled carnival of house music and sex. He falls in love with Miguel, a local party boy, who introduces him to ecstasy (MDMA). After a few blissful weeks, Andre receives a disastrous visit from a friend and former lover, Le Déjanté, whom he had shared with Le Doc and whose health has long been poor. Through Le Déjanté’s tactlessness, Andre must admit to Miguel that he is seropositive. They break up dramatically and Andre returns to Paris. At a visit to the beach that summer Andre continues to confide in Le Doc, through whom he encounters a practitioner of experimental Chinese medicine and with whom he tries various proposed cures. He and Le Doc also share caring responsibilities when either one falls ill. As Andre’s condition stabilizes while Le Doc worsens and dies, Andre becomes increasingly disillusioned and turns back to party culture. The novel ends with an imagined monologue delivered from Orbital Station Alpha, giving an optimistic if perhaps ironic message of human survival through adaptation to HIV, now evolved into a harmless parasite, and sexualized space travel. Owen Heathcote describes this coda as “a literally queer view of the planet”.

To contextualize the novel fully, one needs to highlight its position at a specific juncture in the gay AIDS epidemic. Of interest here is Lawrence Schehr’s assertion that, in more recent AIDS fiction, there is a new set of discourses that arise partly as a response to the previously existing ones, and partly as a reaction to and symptom of radically improved medical treatment. Whereas the novels Schehr examines do employ technical and scientific metaphor, they draw heavily on the realm of computer-assisted technology and, as Schehr points out, the concept of the cyborg, which itself has a quite different, strongly feminist pedigree, to be contrasted with that of nature (and especially Nature).

The way to the problem lies not so much in the general process Schehr describes, which did indeed take place, but in how he glosses over the specifics of recent history. Un ruban noir is neither early nor “newer”. It dates from before the group of novels discussed by Schehr, of which all but two out of 21 hail from 2002-2005 (RV 209). The oldest in Schehr’s list is from 1999, and only one other is from 2001; both are referred to fleetingly (RV 197, 207). Schehr says that in 1981-84, “ordinary, garden-variety sodomy may indeed come to mean death, [but] in a decade or so is redefined in another way” (RV 203). While the first proposition seems incontrovertible, the second would rather telescope history, given that 2002 is in fact two decades later than the crisis. Douglas Morrey specifies that in France in 1995, while society had become much more knowledgeable about AIDS, the prevailing institutionalized medico-ethical discourse perpetuated the idea that “AIDS [was] associated with the gay community and AIDS sufferers [were] defined by their death which is always assumed to be not only immanent but imminent.”

Borel’s novel dates from a time when AIDS was still a deadly disease in France and indeed in all the West, when treatments were expensive, unpleasant, and risky. This fact is reflected many times within it, notably when Le Doc elaborates to Andre on his view of the drug AZT, which he discourages using: “L’AZT, vieux anticancéreux rangé des chimios depuis vingt ans pour trop grande toxicité, a miraculeusement envahi le marché américain [...] jusqu’à l’estomac des malades, dont il remonte les lymphocytes
T4 pendant six mois avant de les liquider à grands coups d’aplasie médullaire, d’anémies, de nausées et de perte de poids” (RN 193). It is clear what the stakes of hasty adoption of the latest “miracle cure” can be in terms of human suffering.

The text thus bespeaks an awareness more associated with certain kinds of expression that typically distance themselves from any kind of scientific discourse, instead favouring a more personalized understanding. According to Mireille Rosello, at the time of Un ruban noir public discourse around AIDS, particularly visual scientific discourse such as educational television, provided a comforting pro-science narrative that emphasized the growth in knowledge about the virus and its ways. The strategy works to the detriment, she says, of communicating individual sufferers’ conditions and experiences, thus hindering opportunities for treatment and prevention but also for critical, ethical analysis.

The “quotidien” is not taken on board by representations of the virus that address and fuel our desire for scientific explanations without questioning or examining the potentially fetishistic aspects of such a desire. [...] We need voices that will accept to introduce the painful dimension of the infected body [...] Such stories agree, in advance, to give up on the aura of legitimacy conferred by the presence of Science. In exchange, they regain a form of freedom that allows them to question the very authority they are renouncing.25

In representing so brutally the consequences of misguided medical policy on the bodies of AIDS victims, Un ruban noir would seem to be a good candidate for Rosello’s model of the creatively critical response-text. Certainly it has little time for the medico-capitalist establishment, which one might call corporate science but also (from the novel’s point of view) a manifestation of Anglo-Saxon globalization, a familiar bugbear for French progressives. Indeed, André is scandalized at the greed that underlies the popularization and, more pointedly, the marketing of AZT, which of course is made possible by an Anglo-liberal socioeconomic system: “C’est en ces jours de rage que l’on en vient à haïr le libéralisme, le grand capital et la World Company” (RN 193-94). Given such otherwise typical French political attitudes within the novel, it is all the more unusual for its positive attitude towards nature, as evidenced not least by its borrowing of “nature-talk”, and its situation of gay men as creatures within an environment.

Un ruban noir’s title itself hints at a mournful feeling for nature. As noted by Morrey and Heathcote, the novel is highly kinetic in metaphor, with pulsating dance music, characters figured as dancing atoms, drugs going off in the body like fission bombs, and perhaps more prosaically many high-speed journeys by plane and automobile. The car journeys, in particular, take place over the surface of a structure that becomes symbolically overdetermined. On his first night out in Barcelona, having just taken his first E, André walks towards his new friend’s car parked on the Passeig de Gracia, “double et vertigineux ruban de goudron qui scintille sous la pleine lune” (RN 43). This black ribbon is a wondrous, magical mystery road: it evokes a possibly Möbius-looping ruban noir, to borrow Heathcote’s term for the whole text (SO 230), of neverending chemical and sexual adventure. Perhaps it relates metonymically to hard house music, the novel’s bande son, which as Morrey notes is likened more than once to a good virus (ST 394; cf. RN 219, 253). And yet, to turn again to Heathcote, the excesses of drugs and post-AIDS sex turn the whole scene into a “sarabande de la mort”, the titular black ribbon thus connoting the death that lies at the heart of the Parisian gay scene as well as the historical death of that gay scene (SO 228; cf. RN 330).
We can understand from the way the black ribbon develops as a motif that it is a deeply ambivalent one, tainted as the plot progresses by its obvious connection with death. Both Morrey and Heathcote have described instances of the novel’s ambivalent aspects, notable despite what they see as its optimistic message. I certainly agree with their view of its overall character. Where I differ somewhat is in choosing the site of its anguish. Neither critic quite accounts fully for the fact that the novel deplores not only the destruction that HIV wreaks on its human environment, but also the degradations humans wreak on their planetary one. Hints emerge even in the work’s joyous earlier sections. Sat in front of a delicious paella, with a night of happy excess ahead, André contemplates the Mediterranean “dans le soleil et la mer et les cris des gamins qui risquent l’orteil dans des eaux où flottent varech et plastique” (RN 116). Later, in the pivotal fourth chapter wherein he has returned from Barcelona²⁶, André amplifies the message of wanton, heedless pollution in an internal monologue. The passage follows a night’s walk with Le Doc in a deserted eighteenth-century garden. Heathcote has previously quoted a brief excerpt (SO 228), italicized below, which again references the titular black ribbon, but without giving the ecologist context which can be seen in a fuller quotation.

First, one cannot help but remark at Borel’s equation of humankind with leprosy. For all that the AIDS-identified homosexual might be thought of as abject, it is hard to imagine a better way of upstaging that cultural identification. In a reinforcing contrast, the image of Nature — animated, but not anthropomorphized — protecting the innocent and the insidious alike makes clear in whom the real death drive lies. Furthermore, it is heterosexual humans who are most strongly identified with parasitism and with plague. The barren land is a consequence of human reproduction; human love noise, not techno, is the soundtrack to the world’s end.

In his reading of the italicized lines regarding the titular black ribbon, Heathcote quotes the lines in italics above, but gives the impression, perhaps unintended, that they apply specifically to the gay scene (SO 228). The above context makes clear that the incarnate sickness is all of humanity, “infamous humanity”, voracious, reproducing humanity. Our technological ravages matter because we are so many: we are a deathly pest specifically to the extent that we breed. This is indeed a queer look at the planet, but more unusually a queer look at Nature, capitalized no less. The passage is most interested in showing how Nature is ruined by procreative heterosexuality, the very institution it is normally held to justify.

One aspect of the novel’s relationship with nature that could be viewed as problematic is its narrator’s praxis. Clearly, as an air tourist, a modern hospital worker, and a lover of electronic music and drugs culture, André is a consumer of industrial products. Un
ruban noir does not resolve this situational hypocrisy. The passage quoted above might constitute a revelation, but it follows another conversation with Le Doc wherein André says "Je ne me renie pas, je me pose de sales questions, c’est tout", whereupon Le Doc calls André out on how little he enquires after his own daily intake of alcohol, cigarettes, and tranquilizers (RN 155). It seems that for all the novel topicalizes expanding one’s mind, the narrator makes similarly debatable progress in acknowledging his own abuse of Gaia (RN 178-79).

André’s difficulty in confronting his personal environmental problem works in tandem, I believe, with a larger theoretical problem: the hostile feminization of the cyborg. While Haraway’s version is better than a goddess, the first cyborg we meet in Un ruban noir — à la une, no less — is a ghoulish woman-cum-torturing robot:

Le sang gicle dans l’éprouvette, noir, épais, déposant des traînées de graisse le long des parois translucides. Un tube, puis deux, trois, quatre, cinq, dix [...] qui surgissent de nulle part dans la pièce uniformément blanche où l’infirmière sans visage officie avec des gestes d’automate. Une sangle me retient attaché au fauteuil de dentiste, une grosse aiguille fichée à la saignée du bras vomit mon organe fluide [...] L’infirmière sans bouche, sans nez et sans prunelles est devenue machine de métal dont les bras anguleux m’embrassent de plus en plus fort. (RN 9)

In this opening scene, which proves to have been a dream flashback to André’s HIV test while he was napping on the flight to Barcelona, the nurse swiftly becomes one with the dentist’s chair, her roboticism overdetermined as her being a metal machine. Her torturous appendages, the needles, savagely appropriate André’s abjected biological self to the point of being able to vomit it. The blood might initially be black and disgusting, but it is still a liquid organ, and a proprietary one at that: “mon organe fluide”. Given that, as we learn at the novel’s end, planet Earth is “notre petite couille bleue” (RN 331), we can speculate that already Borel might be figuring man, perhaps gay man specifically, as passive, “natural”, and Earthly, in the face of a nightmarish, penetrating version of a future Eve. Overall the relationship looks unfortunately like a misogynist version of, to borrow again from Heathcote (SO 223), the classic violent homosexual cooptation of the other in and by the self.

The impression of an underlying misogyny persists when the vision fades. The torturess-robot is replaced not by her presumably well-meaning, healing analogue, but instead (in a professional demotion) by a smiley air hostess, with a benign, presumably feminine robotic voice to explain her behaviour.

— Monsieur ?... Monsieur! Nous sommes arrivés! Réveillez-vous!
Un visage souriant surmonté de la barrette Air France surgit de la boîte de torture.
— Bienvenue à Barcelone. J’espère que vous avez effectué un bon voyage. Au plaisir de vous revoir sur nos lignes... (RN 10)

While I agree with Morrey (after N. Katherine Hayles) that the cyborg marks a challenge to Western society’s dominant order because it represents the post-human (ST 295), I would also like to ask what motivates the novel’s ambivalent response to it. Morrey identifies this ambivalence in Un ruban noir’s figuration of cyborgs as being presented variously with a positive affect, like the DJ; or a negative one, like André in the opening passage above, or Palatine in the biofeedback machine, the latter two men being examples of AIDS patients hooked up to machines. Perhaps André at the opening might be becoming a cyborg, against his will; but this is mostly due to his intimate interaction with one, and a female one at that.
The harrowing encounter with the nightmare cyborg-nurse has its own positive double in a male-male phlebotomy later on, when André tries his best to draw Le Doc’s blood gently. Le Doc’s reported speech is italicized in the original text: “Juger l’intromission de l’acier à l’organique selon l’inclinaison du bras, angle délicat car ne plie pas quand tu piques ou ça claque, et ajuster sur la peau le sparadrap que l’on noue en ruban. Noir et lourd, l’organe liquide grimpe péniblement vers le vide […]” (RN 195). It is doubtful that the tourniquet’s ruban and the noir of the blood might have coincided by accident here. Behind Le Doc’s jocular warning, we can sense both one gay man’s anxiety and his appeal to another gay man to care for him. This appeal is answered, sincerely and with tender care, by André who is the voice of the novel. The text itself is linked metonymically, via the title, with both Le Doc’s vulnerable, living blood and one of the tools involved in its treatment. The message is clear: gay men, specifically, are the natural, vulnerable, living ones, to be remembered. At the same time, we recall that the fear of humans being replaced by machines was a popular concern in the French mainstream media at least as early as 1948, and has since been a familiar topic in discussions of cybernetics. When one considers the vulnerability of the organic gay male phlebotomist versus the threat of the cyborg female one, in context with the fear underlying the image of the male AIDS patient hooked up to the machine, it is hard not to wonder whether the cyborg’s feminine aspect might itself be a problem from the novel’s point of view. The dynamic certainly follows the pattern described by Mary Ann Doane, according to whom ‘a certain anxiety concerning the technological is often allayed by a displacement of this anxiety onto the figure of the woman or the idea of the feminine’.

It is worthwhile briefly discussing some aspects of L’Ève future, insofar as they express ideas about the cyborg that appear to recur in Un ruban noir. The novel by Villiers explores the creation of a robotic woman, l’andréide, who would be an improved and idealized replacement of a flawed real one. Doane and others have explored its influence on later works of science fiction, such as Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1927). What I would like to emphasize is that although the robot Maria from Lang’s film is deadly, so was Villiers’s Hadaly; she carried a dagger that she could use with deadly aplomb. It would be fair to speak of a succession of stabbing, penetrating female cyborgs, into which Un ruban noir’s nurse fits (and André does not). Moreover, as Doane explains, the animation of Hadaly, who as a machine cannot reproduce, with the spirit of a catatonic living human mother provides a dynamic antecedent for the pairing in Metropolis of robot-Maria, who cannot be a mother, with the human Maria, who is portrayed very strongly as one. “The maternal and the mechanical/synthetic coexist in a relation that is a curious imbrication of dependence and antagonism.” Concerning older robot-woman texts in general, Doane speaks of a struggle between a male desire to appropriate the maternal function, and a countervailing desire to safeguard and honour the maternal figure, the latter impulse eventually winning in the case of Metropolis. Considering that at the end of Un ruban noir, Gaia becomes a petite couille bleue, it seems safe to say that the drive towards appropriation has the upper hand in that text.

Morrey has complimented Un ruban noir for its nuanced approach towards alternative medicine, and also for having exemplified a multifaceted approach to ecology, after Guattari (ST 396-97). He traces Borel’s environmental commitment to the writer’s belonging to a younger generation, with different political priorities (ST 398). I agree...
with Morrey’s welcoming of the ecological content. However, it seems puzzling that in this generation of new priorities, there might not be more such interest in ecology in recent gay novels, notably those of Hervé Guibert; or for that matter in those of an even later generation, which on the basis of Schehr’s study seems instead to have opted for the wonders of technology wholesale.

Un ruban noir conceptualizes nature in ways that are truly unusual for the French queer landscape of any generation. At its best, it offers a vision of Nature as a concrete and balanced system to which all living creatures belong, with an order that is preserved by coexistence rather than cultural practice. In this aspect it follows closely Lovelock’s concept of Gaia, which he and other ecologists define as “a complex entity involving the Earth’s biosphere, atmosphere, oceans and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life”37. Un ruban noir also shares much with the thought of the pioneer Marxist theorist Mario Mieli, who similarly conceived of the naturalness of homosexuality as a phenomenon like any other, observable in animals 38.

Where Borel’s novel differs from Mieli particularly is in what I see as its lurking misogyny 39. I would dare suggest that this stems not from its affinity with Nature, but rather from its fetishization of masculinity. The novel’s many appreciations of diverse masculine beauty are underpinned with both apotheoses of sperm and genitals — the couille bleue, for example — and subtler cultural trappings. Le Doc’s beloved abandoned garden, in which André has his revelation, is blessed with a “statuette priapique qu’aucun antiquaire n’a subtilisé” (RN 173). Shortly after reflecting on Palatine’s sexy (if deceptive) skinhead look, André imagines Greek seafarers enjoying a more beautiful French coastline two thousand years ago than the one he and his friends know now (RN 147-48), in a note of possible masculinist nostalgia drawing on Classical visions of homosocial and homosexual idyll. Perhaps such a worldview is only “naturally” uninterested in women; but again, the way in which the novel characterizes cyborgs suggests an underlying misogyny not unknown to Classical masculinism.

Perhaps the way towards a truly queer ecology, lacking in any gender bias, is by choosing Nature over its deified interpretation, Gaia. When concluding her study of the incoherences within various Catholic authorities’ attempts at allying doctrine with science, Odile Fillod says, “fonder une théologie sur la science reviendrait non seulement à la rendre dangereusement instable, mais finalement à la remplacer par le dévoilement par la science des lois de la nature” 40. In light of Fillod’s observation, we might turn back to Rosello’s ideas, with Un ruban noir as a test case. The novel succeeds at integrating a personal homosexual reality with discourses of science, medicine, and ecology. Where it does not succeed in my view is in its integration of sex, specifically the “other” sex. It is a gay novel rather than a queer one. Whereas the structure of a human body need not necessarily be sexed as male or female, even when it is, the differences in both brain and behaviour of males and of females are by no means great or even observable at all — a fact corroborated by observations of animal models, as Fillod notes 41. We can look upon Un ruban noir as both an unusual expression of queer ecology, and an intriguing but failed experiment in queer science 42.
NOTES


2. This wording echoes Eve Sedgwick, who described the question of who benefits from the homosexual/homosexual double bind as a perennial 'site of struggle'. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, New York, Columbia University, 1985, p. 89-90.

3. Certainly, AIDS persists as a public health problem and a compounding of poverty in the global South.


8. Hocquenghem’s ideas on object choice (which he rejects as a basis for categorizing sexuality), on nature, and on what he terms the arbitrary division between biology and psychology can be found throughout Le Désir homosexuel (p. 24, 41, 94, 182 passim). For discussion, see Jason Hartford, "Hocquenghem, Mieli and Seahorses: Biology and Nature at the Roots of queer theory," the researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal 4.2.11, p. 31-56 (p. 42-43, 45-47).


13. Ibid., p. 316.


17. For an overview of queer theory's emergence in the early 1990s, see Michael Warner, "Queer and Then?", the chronicle review, 1 Jan 2012, online: http://chronicle.com/article/queerthen/130161/ [accessed 5 Jan 2012], p. 2-3. For the situation in France at the time, see for example Gunther, p. 122-26.


23. Cf. rv 200. I am of course referring here to the celebrated work by Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century", in Neil Badminton (ed.), Posthumanism, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000 [1985], p. 69-84. Morrey also evokes the cyborg in his discussion of Un ruban noir, a topic to be returned to presently.

24. ST 393; see also Agar, p. 59-60.

The book’s sections are unmarked, separated only by next-page breaks (six). The average section length, discounting the seven-page coda, is around 52 pages.

ST 394-95; RN 101, 166. In fact at the point in the novel cited by Morrey (RN 166) Palatine is known not to have HIV (cf. RN 205).


While the term ‘android’ is attested since at least 1760, Villiers wished to present, in this replacement woman, an entirely new kind of being to his readers. Alan Raitt, notes to L’Ève future, 1993, in Villiers, p. 396-437 (p. 408-09).

Fritz Lang, Metropolis, Germany, 2010 [1927], 145 min.

Villiers, p. 155.

Doane, p. 114.

Ibid., p. 112.

Ibid., p. 114.

Lovelock, p. 10.

Mario Mieli, Elementi di critica omosessuale, Torino, Giulio Einaudi, 1977, p. 211; see also p.21-22, 28 passim. Readers are encouraged to refer to the Italian original. Extant translations of Mieli into French and English, by Massimo Prearo and Robert Fernbach respectively, are both problematic (see Hartford, p. 44 n. 23, p.49).

See for example Mieli, p. 26-27.


Ibid., p. 329.

My thanks to Louise Lyle and Paul Scott for having generously shared their access to research materials.