

‘The Grotte du Renne, Leroi-Gourhan and Flaubert's *Légende de saint Julien l'Hospitalier* (1877): the Question of Préhistoire(s) to Delimit the Human’

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Abstract:

This article reconsiders the important work of Leroi-Gourhan through the lens of Chris Johnson's ‘Leroi Gourhan and the Limits of the Human’ (2011) by returning to French prehistory of the 1860s behind Leroi Gourhan's discoveries and interpretations of hominid remains and artefacts in the Grotte du Renne. The Exposition universelle of 1867 and French publications of the period capture the importance of ‘préhistoire’ for Second Empire France materialized in Napoleon III's establishment at Saint-Germain-en-Laye of the first national Musée des Antiquités nationales dedicated to their collections. The archaeological discoveries, and the debates they inspired, did not escape the encyclopedic bricolage and designs of Flaubert. With delicious *clins d'oeil* to the question of ‘l'homme fossile’ and ‘l'homme futur’ that he had already debated with Louis Bouilhet, this article uncovers how Flaubert's *Légende de Saint Julien* details the ‘limits of the human’ in Johnson's reading of Leroi Gourhan. By returning to ‘real’ counterparts for the legendary Stag in Flaubert's tale its contextual, allegedly fantastical, ‘préhistoires’ can better be excavated. To find the non-legendary, extreme contemporary, sources for Flaubert's disturbing text crucially informs critique of the dehistoricization of seeing in postwar French cultural studies and sciences of the human.

Keywords:

Leroi-Gourhan; the Grotte du Renne; Préhistoire; l'homme fossile; *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*

According to the *Petit Robert* the dating and definition of the noun ‘Préhistoire’ in French in 1872¹ rests upon the first usage and etymology in 1865 of the adjective ‘préhistorique’:

(1865; de *pré-*, et *historique*). 1° Antérieur à l'apparition des témoignages écrits ou à l'usage des métaux (V. Préhistoire). *Les âges, les temps préhistoriques*. Relatif à la Préhistoire. *L'homme préhistorique*. Site, grotte, monument préhistorique; ossements, outils préhistoriques. Animaux préhistoriques. 2° Très ancien, suranné, démodé (V. **Antédiluvien**).

To name, define, and date ‘l’homme préhistorique’ in the 1860s raised hotly contested debate redolent of contemporary scientific controversy about ‘the Human’. In 2021 the International Commission on Stratigraphy will pronounce on whether ‘The Anthropocene’ is official as a scientific and technical term, as a geological age and hence teleology of human planetary interventions and repercussions for all species.² In consequence, Chris Johnson’s prescient turn for French Studies to key thinking in French anthropology and archaeology of the 1940s and 1950s as located in the work of André Leroi-Gourhan (1911–1986) stands out on two related counts. To recognize the key critical junctures of *Le Geste et la Parole* (1964) as summative, because this work also already radically underpinned 1960s French philosophy of the linguistic turn, *Tel Quel* and the postmodern condition, was simultaneously to translocate the pressing questions of Leroi-Gourhan’s earlier *L’Homme et la matière* (1943) and *Milieu et techniques* (1945).³ For Johnson, study of cybernetics in the 1950s was thus the fundamental ‘missing link’ for understanding the ‘stratigraphy’ (my formulations) of French critical theory. In a memorable, because characteristically convivial, long lunch in Nottingham in 2010 Chris and I delighted in how our very different work in French Studies derived from our shared concerns (dating from our postgraduate days at Cambridge) with knowledge of scientific *mises en contexte*. These crucially inform how to critique accepted modes of seeing in postwar French cultural studies and intellectual history.

Paradigm shifts are also not always Kuhnian. The untimely loss to French Studies of Chris Johnson’s further interventions and impacts only underscores the necessary place of key precursors, catalysts, and non-conformist inquiry. In memory of Chris, this article reengages his renewing inspiration in ‘Leroi Gourhan and the Limits of the Human’ (2011),⁴ to spearhead engagement with ‘préhistoire’ as a significant, and French, discipline and interdisciplinary force. My interest here is specifically the French ‘préhistoire(s)’ of the 1860s behind Leroi-Gourhan’s pivotal discoveries – material and interpretative -- in the Grotte du Reine. In that immediate cultural incorporation of ‘préhistoire’ as defined by its adjectival forces of 1865 is already evident in French literature by 1877 in Flaubert’s *La Légende de Saint Julien l’Hospitalier* then offers new lenses for renegotiating ‘préhistoire’, and for de-postmodernizing and historically re-contextualizing cli-fi.

In the distinguishing contributions of Leroi-Gourhan, to engage with ‘prehistoire’ is to go back into its future, as Johnson’s conclusions confirm:

[T]he narrative of human evolution proposed in *Le Geste et la Parole* challenges traditional humanist conceptions of the limits of the human, encouraging us to rethink the origins of humanity (a plurality of early human forms) and underlining the essentially extended and externalized nature of the human mind. [...] Unlike more traditional variants of humanism, Leroi-Gourhan's account locates the passage from nature to culture not in language but in the cybernetic relationship of co-determination that is the evolutionary condition of possibility of the emergence of language. This enlarged humanism extends the definition of humanity to the different forms of 'prehuman' toolmakers inhabiting our distant past, and demonstrates the anatomical and cognitive continuities linking this past to our present. (Johnson, *Limits*, p. 487)

Johnson's recognition in Leroi-Gourhan's differently 'cybernetic' humanism here – 'the externalized nature of the human mind' -- is its challenge to archaeology's approaches to artefactual evidence and logic of explanation pre-judged by suppositions concerning the larger brain and hence language and technological capacity of anatomically modern humans. Rather the elemental, liminal, toolmaking in stone and bone of 'prehumans' is the common prerequisite and determinant for 'human' cultural communication as coextensive with community. It is then the lower limit of the human, as we have called it, correspond[ing] with the period known as the Lower Palaeolithic, which extends from approximately - 2.5 million years to 250,000 BP. Leroi-Gourhan's analysis traces the different stages of *humanization* (his term) that lead from the earliest known forms of humanity at the start of the Lower Paleolithic through to the intermediary forms of the Middle Paleolithic and finally to the appearance of anatomically modern humans during the Middle and Upper Paleolithic (250,000-10,000 years BP). The fossil record itself, restricted quite literally to stones and bones, shows two parallel series of developments: on the one hand there is a doubling of brain capacity to 1000 cc during the Middle Paleolithic, and a further fifty per cent increase to approximately 1500 cc by the time of the Upper Paleolithic; on the other hand, there is a visible complexification and diversification of the tools associated with human fossil remains. Leroi-Gourhan is careful to qualify that, despite appearances, this parallel development does not demonstrate a simple relation of cause and effect between brain and tool, in which a spontaneous and independent growth of brain size would determine ever higher levels of technical sophistication. First, it is the evolutionarily prior event of

the upright posture that provides the mechanical conditions for enlarged cranial capacity [...] Second, the relationship between brain and tool, as Leroi-Gourhan describes it, is a reciprocal rather than a one-way relationship, one of co-evolution, co-determination, or, again to use the language of cybernetics, ‘feedback.’ (Johnson, *Limits*, pp. 476-77)

Here Johnson’s careful reappraisal of the second volume of *Le Geste et la Parole* for its distinctiveness also reveals his own, as traced in his spatial, hand-eye coordination and evaluation metaphors of ‘hands’ above and below that balance and weigh, like Leroi-Gourhan, the onward significance of ‘the externalized nature of the human mind’:

However, the distinctiveness of [Leroi-Gourhan’s] analysis lies in its articulation of this contemporary history (postwar period) with the prehistory of humanity [...] His argument is that there is a progressive divergence of the biological reality of the human, which he describes as a ‘fossile vivant,’ from the technological world that the human has, quite literally, secreted. Here, it is not simply a question of the inhuman nature of the industrialized world – its imposition of accelerated modes of existence and its widespread degradation of the natural environment. While Leroi-Gourhan criticizes these features of contemporary technology he is also concerned with what effects different modes of technological substitution may have had on the human itself, and more precisely on the cybernetic circuit of gesture and speech, hand and brain, that has defined the human. On the one hand, it is logical that the process of externalization that is specific to human evolution should affect what is traditionally considered to be the motor of that evolution the brain or mind: [...] On the other hand, his diagnosis of the current state of *Homo sapiens – l’homme actuel* – is that there is something out of balance, a mismatch between the biological infrastructure of the human as it has evolved in concert with the tool, and the technological world itself that, in every sense of the word, exceeds the human. This returns us to the question, and concept, of equilibrium, which [...] was a central, if unarticulated, element of Leroi-Gourhan’s account of the evolution of forms. This concept is especially important as Leroi-Gourhan begins to extrapolate from the past and present of human evolution to its future [...]: ‘L’ajustement des individus qui conservent le cerveau et la carcasse corporelle de l’homme de Cro-Magnon se fait par une distorsion grandissante (II, 17-18).’ (Johnson, *Limits*, pp. 483-484)

If new ways of seeing – ‘extrapolation’ – require reflective, externalized understanding their harmonizing of seemingly contradictory, multiple and hitherto certain evidence into a different material-conceptual exchange defines the significance of Johnson’s work in French Studies to articulate the broader implications that Leroi-Gourhan could not.⁵ To balance material (counter-)evidence with (counter-)argument is therefore essential for future, as well as past research on ‘préhistoire’. I will now take forward one re-equilibration not in Johnson’s purview, namely Leroi-Gourhan’s delimited historicizing of his own work for its future present. To erase the significant archaeological first discoveries of ‘l’homme de Cro-Magnon’ in the very context of the Grotte du Renne is also to dismiss the earlier extrapolated thinking that is the making of French Préhistoire.

Leroi-Gourhan’s pivotal ‘feedback’ discoveries in the Grotte du Reine

The controversy of Leroi-Gourhan’s work pivots on definition and dating in his argument for ‘l’homme de Cro-Magnon’ as early human not ‘pre-human’ and, in consequence, his extrapolation by means of the tool evidence of the co-presence – and hence prehistoric polygenesis – of differentiated early human cultures including anatomically modern humans.⁶ That this occurred over a longer time span than envisaged by rival theories of the inevitable and rapid eradication by the latter over the former (based upon assumed superior brainpower matching more sophisticated tools) was central to Leroi-Gourhan’s ‘Chronologie des Grottes d’Arcy-sur-Cure (Yonne)’ also appearing in 1964 and published with Arlette Leroi-Gourhan. It culminates the mapping at this major site of French ‘préhistoire’ through extensive excavations deploying new scientific dating techniques from 1946 – including Arlette’s major study of prehistoric pollens -- under André’s Directorship of the Paris Centre de Recherches Préhistoriques. This cave complex, and its complex dating and interpretative challenge, is mapped by means of the (historical) animal naming for the different caves as reflecting their significant material finds:

le Loup, l’Hyène, le Cheval où se situe des gravures, le Bison, le Lion, le Renne et le Lagopède. Toutes ces grottes ont livré des témoins de l’industrie humaine. [...] Les plus anciennes traces de la vie de l’homme sont illustrées par des outils sur galets, très frustes, situées dans de minces couches de graviers au fond de la grotte de l’Hyène ; la datation en est difficile. Il est cependant possible de suivre une chronologie sûre à partir de la

couche 29 de cette grotte, d'où provient une industrie moustéroïde accompagnée de faune [...] Malheureusement, un certain nombre de lacunes existent dans l'ensemble stratigraphique, les unes causées par l'érosion, les autres déterminées par des fouilles anciennes, qui ont complètement anéanti certaines couches [...] Il est encore permis d'espérer en retrouver des témoins en d'autres points de la falaise.⁷

In multi-occupation prehistoric sites such as the Arcy-sur-Cure caves, errors in chronological dating significantly increase due to the long mix and movement of stone and bone remains by non-human and human interventions. Modern archaeological discovery through corroboration of evidence submitted to multiple forensic techniques, for example palaeobotanical matching of ancient pollens against climate data modelling, radiocarbon and DNA dating, fundamentally distinguishes postwar French 'préhistoire' from 'des fouilles anciennes' with its reliance for interpretation on geological sciences alone. To air-brush the important making of the French discipline of prehistory from this site, however, is paradoxically to adopt the very presumption that Leroi-Gourhan everywhere challenged, namely the automatically superior technical capacities of modern *Homo faber* by comparison with similar (inferior) predecessors using the same (successful) excavation tools:

Fouillées depuis cent ans, ces grottes ont toutes perdu leurs couches supérieures et il ne reste peu ou pas de témoins ; seul le hasard, telle la découverte en 1963 d'une tombe halstattienne par des spéléologues, peut encore apporter des documents en place.

Cependant les musées et collections particulières possèdent tant de poteries, de pointes de flèches, d'objets datant du Bronze ou du Fer que la grande densité de l'habitat protohistorique sur les bords de la Cure ne peut faire de doute.⁸

The clinching argument for Leroi-Gourhan's 'Chronologie' and cybernetic theories was discovery of prehuman burials as further significant evidence that these were independent, and not copied from anatomically human practices. For postwar French Préhistoire peremptorily to bury its own material and disciplinary prehistory, however, has serious counter-productive costs for thinking the 'Anthropocene'. One in particular is French Préhistoire's longstanding case for culturally, and for Leroi-Gourhan *interculturally*, precise terms such as 'l'homme Cro-Magnon', 'tombe halstattienne', 'moustéroïde' for its arguments. Not helped by English as the *lingua franca* of science publication and popular cultural productions since the 1950s, 'Neandertal'

conflates periods and things Paleolithic, and hence ‘limits of the human’.⁹ Leroi-Gouhan’s work as indicative of French Préhistoire and its disciplinary training before 1940 uses ‘l’homme de Néanderthal’ clearly to designate prehistoric inhabitants, sites and scientific controversies that cannot be confused with those of ‘l’homme de Cro-Magnon’.¹⁰ More inclusive, because more (inter)culturally informed, history of French ‘Préhistoire demonstrates that important accretions of ‘first discoveries’ in the Grotte du Renne are not only by Leroi-Gourhan. Reinstating those of 1862-3 then delimits errors today that come through anti-historical overlay imposed on earlier first scientific naming, but also doing.

The first excavations of the Grotte du Renne and the Construction of French Prehistory Collections

The place of ‘le hasard’ (Gourhan above) in major fossil discoveries and, indeed, their onward recognition needs cautionary balancing against the place and importance of informed serendipity. Landowners with major archaeological finds on their own or local lands, such as the eighth Marquis de Vibraye Guillaume-Paul Louis Maximilien Hurault (1809-1878), constitute a now disregarded stratum of ‘préhistoriens’ possessing extensive archaeological and geological knowledge with time and means to pursue their interests.¹¹ In 1862-3 he undertook excavations in Laugerie-Basse, the Fourneau-du-Diable and at Arcy-sur-Cure, and became a major collector of prehistoric objects and artifacts deriving from these and other French sites.¹² Despite echoing Leroi-Gourhan’s dismissiveness of the ‘unprofessional’ work of 1860s precursors, the website at the Arcy-sur-Cure Cave Site Museum names the Marquis de Vibraye’s as the first excavation and discovery of ‘une mandibule attribuée à un Néandertalien’.¹³ His major, but now overlooked, contributions to ‘préhistoire’ of the 1860s are due to the predominant narrative of ‘first discoveries’ in Abbeville by Boucher de Perthes of hominid remains, and the Moulin Quignon Affair.¹⁴ The Marquis de Vibraye was an early adopter of stratigraphy for dating (and hence recognition of the antiquity of ‘l’homme préhistorique’), and was also the first to use the term ‘vénus’ for Palaeolithic art depicting female ivory statuettes, of which ‘La Dame de Brassempouy’ is among the best known.¹⁵ Moreover, the Marquis de Vibraye’s immense archaeological collections of prehistoric artifacts and art forms importantly formed the major exhibits at the Exposition Universelle de Paris in 1867, and upon his death in 1878 these collections were integrated into the holdings and exhibits at the Paris Musée de l’Homme.

‘Extrapolation’ by lateral research of the circle and correspondence of ‘amateur’ collectors such as the Marquis de Vibraye with the major ‘professional’ archeologists of ‘préhistoire’ of the day also reveals the two-way exchange and feedback (‘cybernetics’) of specialist knowledge by direct handling. Collectors of the stature of Vibraye directly encountered the wide-spread problem of fabrication and sale of fraudulent as well as genuine artefacts. Only coming to light in 1929 an unpublished letter of 1865 from the Marquis to Jules Desnoyers (1800-1887) decides the case as expert among experts:

Une autre inscription a été vendue à M. Cristy [sic], vous pouvez à ce sujet consulter M. Lartet. Nos nouvelles fouilles des foyers de l’âge du Renne ont été assez fructueuses, je n’ai encore pu déballer qu’une caisse sur neuf. Je livre à votre examen un objet qui n’est point de la fabrique des Maillet. J’aurais pu mettre de l’art à reproduire de trois quarts un objet que je vous dessine en profil pour ne point vous influencer, je crois y voir, plus que dans les nuages, la figure d’un éléphant.¹⁶

‘M. Lartet’ here does not distinguish between two major French archaeologists, father Édouard (1801-1871) and son Louis (1840-1899), to whom we will return. The connection with ‘M. Cristy’ [sic], however, may also refer to Henry Christy’s recent work with Édouard Lartet to examine cave sites in the Périgord in 1863, which they co-published in the *Revue archéologique* in 1864.¹⁷ The Grotte du Renne and Arcy discoveries were now indicative of ‘des foyers de l’âge du renne’ in Vibraye’s letter as accepted name for this epoch of ‘préhistoire’, endorsed by Lartet and Christy: ‘Le renne, dira-t-on, qui donne à ses diverses stations du Périgord leur cachet spécial d’ancienneté’.¹⁸ The French public imagination was therefore whetted and eager to see these stone and bone exhibits at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867 and, if they could not attend in person, to read the *Promenades Préhistoriques: l’Exposition Universelle* by Gabriel du Mortillet providing their armchair guided tour.¹⁹ The unmissable orientation to the whole spectacle for visitor and reader alike not only uncovers the marquis de Vibraye’s work as a major French ‘Préhistorien’. It also reinforces the positivist, nationalist, position of France in research and collections dedicated to Préhistoire in 1867 as integrally part of its indelible history and cultural presence:

Première Salle du Travail

La France occupe la portion gauche du palais en entrant par le grand vestibule d'honneur. Son histoire du travail est disposée en commençant par les temps les plus anciens et allant successivement jusqu'aux temps les plus modernes. La première salle intitulée *La Gaule avant l'emploi des métaux*, est consacrée aux temps préhistoriques et plus spécialement l'âge de la pierre. Son classement a été confié aux soins d'une commission présidée par M. Édouard Lartet, et composée de MM. Alexandre Bertrand, Édouard Collomb, Desnoyers, Verchère de Reffye, marquis de Vibraye, G. de Mortillet, secrétaire Cavet, adjoint. Toute la partie gauche est consacrée à la première période de la pierre pendant laquelle existaient des animaux d'espèces actuellement éteintes ou émigrées. La partie droite est réservée à la seconde période de la pierre, caractérisée par l'introduction du polissage des outils de pierre et la domestication des animaux. Comme écrans deux vitrines plates, au milieu de la salle, contiennent, l'une, les principales représentations animales de l'époque du renne, l'autre une magnifique trouvaille d'objets de pierre faite dans un dolmen du Morbihan. Une des principales préoccupations de la commission a été d'écarter de cette salle ce qui pourrait être d'une origine ou d'une authenticité douteuses. Seuls les objets trouvés sur le sol de la France actuelle ont été admis.²⁰

'Industrie' prehistoric and contemporary as powerhouse of France therefore also befitted its establishment of history museums as central to this sense of national heritage.²¹ The special interests of Napoleon III in Gallo-Roman and Celtic antiquities also assured the Exposition Universelle exhibits on 'préhistoire' their newest dedicated Museum. Although he had already established the 'Musée des Antiquités celtiques et gallo-romaines' at the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1862, Napoleon III enlarged and redefined its ambit in 1867 as the 'Musée des Antiquités nationales' (becoming in 2005 the 'Musée d'Archéologie nationale').²² Palaces, the 'âge du renne' and representations of the 'limits of the human' in 1867-8 together find extraordinary literary-cultural resonances in Flaubert's *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier* (1877), which can now be newly excavated.

Rethinking Préhistoire(s) : La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier

The pivotal intertextuality and intermediality in this central tale of *Trois contes*, for example Voragine's *Légende dorée*, the St Julien window in Rouen Cathedral and nineteenth-century hunting manuals, are central to Flaubert's *réécritures* and to interpretations of their religious,

psychological/psychoanalytical and queer imaginaries.²³ The clearly matching hunting scenes – Julien’s killing of the giant stag as determined by the *Légende dorée* in part one reversed in the entirely ‘imaginary’ hunt in part two where Julien is prey not predator of the animals he earlier killed – illustrate Flaubert’s dexterity in representing the ‘externalized nature of the human mind’ (Johnson, *Limits*, p. 487). For literary critics of all theoretical stripes both hunts trigger, and variously explain, Julien’s inner bloodlust and rage that determine both his fateful fulfilment of the giant stag’s curse that he kill his parents and, in part three, his redemption path as saint through final embrace of the ‘leper’. To see Julien’s ‘legendary’ hunts as something more than their externalization of the mind, religion, iconic intertexts or sexuality is to *grasp* – ‘despite appearances’ Johnson, *Limits* p. 476 – the larger scope of Flaubert’s engagements in his *Légende* with ‘the limits of the human’. This move, as Johnson’s to 1950s cybernetics, requires differently informed ‘peripheral vision’ that restores to the two hunts their missing connecting links because these derive from their specific material, scientific and environmental contexts and realities. Flaubert’s *Salammbô* (1862) and *Tentation de saint Antoine* (1874) have already proven their ‘petit détail qui fait vrai’ through his adept antiquarianism.²⁴ His expert interest in ‘Antiquité’ to envisage contemporary French history, and natural history respectively, and informed interest in the nineteenth-century French disciplines of ‘antiquités’, namely archaeology, geology and palaeontology, readily apply to *La Légende*. I have already supplied missing ‘antiquarian’ sources and contemporary contextual frames for both hunts to demonstrate that neither is an imaginary fabrication, but derive from ‘an intermingling of the bones of legend/*histoire* rather than their separation’.²⁵ For the second hunt, smuggled intertexts from the *Vita Antonii* (for the hallucinatory animals and Julien’s final translation to Heaven) inform contemporary controversy over the mixing of St Anthony/St Julien relics and reliquaries. For the first hunt, Flaubert’s scientific ‘joke’ is the giant stag’s real counterparts in extinct Irish elks, Flaubert’s knowledge and description deriving from L. F. Maury’s *Des ossements humains et des ouvrages de main d’homme enfouis dans les roches et les couches de la terre pour servir à éclairer les rapports de l’archéologie et de la géologie* of 1852.²⁶ Through extrapolating Flaubert’s peripheral vision from contemporary ‘préhistoire’ and interests in ‘archéologie’ I can now supply the ‘missing links’ that bring the two hunts together in *La Légende* as exhibition showcases for questioning ‘the limits of the human’.

The contexts for the first hunt in part one are revelatory when the ‘once upon a time’ settings are particularized by inescapable, but hitherto unnoticed, detail. Although informed by Joseph La Vallée’s *La Chasse à tir en France* (1857), Julien’s training in hunting includes the following big game (la grande vénérie): ‘Pour l’attaque du sanglier et les refuites périlleuses, il y avait quarante griffons, poilus comme des ours. Des mâtins de Tartarie, presque plus hauts que des âne, couleur de feu, l’échine large et le jarret droit, étaient destinés à poursuivre des aurochs’.²⁷ Aurochs were not at large in the supposedly ‘Medieval’ period setting of Flaubert’s tale. Their primeval, hyperboreal habitats (‘antédiluvien’ in the *Petit Robert* definition above), however, return more forcefully in the buildup to Julien’s first major hunting spree culminating in the slaughter of the giant ‘stag’:

Un matin *d’hiver*, [Julien] partit avant le jour, bien équipé, une arbalète sur l’épaule et un trousseau de flèches à l’arçon de la selle. [...] *Des gouttes de verglas* se collaient à son manteau, une bise violente soufflait. [...] Trois heures après, il se trouva sur la pointe d’une montagne tellement haute que le ciel semblait presque noir. Devant lui un rocher pareil à un long mur s’abaissait, en surplombant un précipice [...] Il était en chasse *dans un pays quelconque, depuis un temps indéterminé*, par le seul fait de sa propre existence, tout s’accomplissant avec la facilité que l’on éprouve dans les rêves. *Un spectacle extraordinaire l’arrêta. Des cerfs emplissaient un vallon ayant la forme d’un cirque* ; et tassés, les uns près des autres, ils se réchauffaient avec leurs haleines que l’on voyait dans le brouillard. [...] *Le rebord du vallon était trop haut pour le franchir. Ils bondissaient dans l’enceinte, cherchant à s’échapper.* Julien visait, tirait ; [...] Les cerfs rendus furieux se battirent, se cabraient, montaient les uns par-dessus les autres ; et leurs corps avec leur ramures emmêlées faisaient un large monticule, qui s’écroulait, en se déplaçant. [...] De l’autre côté du vallon, sur le bord de la forêt, il aperçut un cerf, une biche et son faon.

Le cerf, qui était *noir et monstrueux de taille, portait seize andouillers* avec une barbe blanche. [...] Le grand cerf l’avait vu, fit un bond. Julien lui envoya sa dernière flèche. Elle l’atteignit au front, et y resta plantée.

Le grand cerf n’eut pas l’air de la sentir ; en enjambant par-dessus les morts, il avançait toujours, allait fondre sur lui, l’éventrer ; et Julien reculait dans une épouvante indicible. *Le prodigieux animal s’arrêta* (OC, pp. 180–1, emphasis added).

By end-stopping the externalized context before the giant stag returns to its *de facto* legendary script and speaks to curse Julien, the prehistoric viewfinders for this ‘dream sequence’ locate it in the ‘époque du Renne’ through metonymic collocation of the ‘grand cerf’ equally furnished with bone hunting ‘tools’ (not to mention language). The freezing of the animal as if frozen in this postglacial time sets it in a prehistoric (cave) painting amid other contemporaneous animals. Moreover, the specific topography of the ‘rebord du vallon’ provides a detailed geography including cave systems like those of Arcy-sur-Cure but also Les Eyzies. Here in 1868 Louis Lartet made the first discovery of ‘Cro-Magnon’ skeletons of four adults and a child, identified from artefacts found alongside them of extinct animal bones, flint tools and objects made from reworked deer antler. It is then revelatory to consult Louis Lartet’s 1868 ‘Mémoire sur une sepulture des anciens troglodytes du Périgord’ and directly connected documents.²⁸ Lartet’s accompanying sketches of the descriptions of the Cros-Magnon valley terrain map all of the elements in Flaubert’s scene. Moreover, in Lartet’s descriptions of the human remains are uncanny, prehistoric, prefigurations of Julien’s dead parents by his hand after his fateful second hunt: ‘à gauche du veillard, le squelette d’une femme, dont la crâne présente au front une éaille profonde faite par un instrument tranchant’.²⁹

If more evidence is needed for the contextual archeological connections of the 1860s for Julien’s hunts the second is prepared by his exploits upon killing the giant stag in his combat with *ancient* peoples tagged by the now stand-out detail in the light of Lartet’s discoveries and publication title in 1868: ‘Il combattit des Scandinaves recouverts d’écailles de poisson, des Nègres munis de rondaches de cuir d’hippopotame et, montés sur des ânes rouges, des Indiens couleur d’or et brandissant par-dessus leurs diadèmes de larges sabres, plus clairs que des miroirs. Il vainquit les Troglodytes et les Anthropophages’ (OC, 182). When Julien no longer hunts or goes to war after winning the hand of an emperor’s daughter, the palace he lives in with his wife is ‘de marbre blanc, bâti à la mauresque, *sur un promontoire* [...] Les chambres, *pleines de crépuscule*, se trouvaient éclairées par les incrustations des murailles. *De hautes colonnettes, minces comme les roseaux, supportaient la voûte des coupoles, décorées de reliefs imitant les stalactites des grottes*’ (OC, pp. 182–3 emphasis added). And matching the ‘dream scene’ of the first hunt the second dream scene hunt situates Julien once more directly in antediluvian ‘préhistoire’, its primordial ‘human origins’ controversies of the 1860s reconfigured in a mocked up version of the Book of Genesis and new shadows of cave peoples:

Quelquefois, dans un rêve, il se voyait comme notre père Adam au milieu du Paradis, entre toutes les bêtes ; en allongeant le bras il les faisait mourir ; ou bien, elles défilaient, deux à deux, par rang de taille, depuis les éléphants et les lions jusqu'aux hermines et aux canards, comme le jour qu'elles entrèrent dans l'arche de Noé. A l'ombre d'une caverne, il dardait sur elles des javelots infailibles ; il en survenait d'autres ; cela n'en finissait pas ; et il se réveillait en roulant des yeux farouches. OC, p. 183)

Flaubert's *Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier* therefore demonstrably exhibits and synthesizes his long fascinations with contemporary French 'préhistoire' (Antiquité(s)) as topic and resource, but also importantly method for seeing. To better investigate contentious contemporary religious and scientific debates – on animal and human evolution as one or distinctive, on civilizations past and their (non)replications in the present – Flaubert's realist fiction after his 1869 *L'Education sentimentale* can best address 'contemporary' French cultural history by layering it into accommodating (Hospitalier) legend. Advantageously this form escapes narrow ideological didacticism, the risk of subject outmodedness, and proves ample as receptacle for discussion of the *longue durée* in relation to civilization and progress. The two hunts then clearly do more than externalize Julien's mind. Rather our reinvestigation of their concerted contexts in French 'préhistoire(s)' of the 1860s also supplies the missing links between both episodes and their larger purpose. As Flaubert's reflective lessons on human being and time they showcase his anti-positivist view on any greater perfectability of 'l'homme futur'. In this he most differs from, yet also pays further tribute to his friend, Louis Bouillet (1821–1869), through the prehistoric (dream) contexts of the two hunts in the *Légende* operating as further literary response to Bouillet's 'Les Fossiles' (1854).³⁰ For Flaubert in *La Légende*, the more peaceable continuities of mankind and matter in the last part of the tale (Leroi-Gourhan, *L'Homme et la matière*, 1943), and the horrors of milieu and (fanatical) hunting and war techniques that he witnessed during the Franco-Prussian War at Croisset (Leroi-Gourhan, *Milieu et techniques*, 1945), connect contemporary humanity only the more firmly to its prehistory and the very 'limits of the human'.

French 'préhistoire(s)': a significant discipline and interdisciplinary force

This article has sought to attribute to Chris Johnson's work the greater attention it deserves by paying tribute to his priorities and methods through their reapplication. To read Flaubert's *Légende* with its contextual, and textual, 'préhistoire(s)' is a further lesson in the immense

leverage of French Studies prehistory research. Chris's identification in Leroi-Gourhan of the blind spots of the linguistic turn (and French literary and cultural studies from the 1970s) integrally mesh with my own in nineteenth-century French Studies: a refusal to unlink and dismiss specific material, scientific and environmental contexts from text provides new spaces for cybernetic 'feedback' loops. To renegotiate 'préhistoire' is therefore more than a greater engagement with the human through reconnecting sciences and arts. To grasp the methods of French prehistory as discipline is at once to reconnect material evidence at hand to impel further thought, and to understand in this process the space for lateral seeing that now takes on larger human imperatives. If I have taken up the 1860s prehistory of postwar French Préhistoire under Leroi-Gourhan to take it (and other modern sciences) to task for presuming as imperfect, and hence dismissible the work of previous (expert) exponents, the same can be said of contemporary literary-critical approaches to Animal Studies, Environmental Humanities and cli-fi as postmodern reflections. If 'Préhistoire' is what defines in the words of Chris Johnson 'the limits of the human', not to acknowledge earlier models, precursors and iconic texts is therefore to delimit how to renew engagement with archaeologies of knowledge and the informed evidence-collecting and reinterpreting work (in archive and field). By contrast, 'Préhistoire' engaged with the 'effects of different modes of technological substitution [...] on the human itself' (Johnson, Limits, p. 483) is a powerfully freeing interdisciplinary force and method for future work in French Studies, because it follows up (Leroi-Gourhan's) appreciations of human diversity on the one hand. On the other hand are the dangers of the anatomically – and atomically in 1946 – modern human, once we see the imperative connection of the 'circuit of gesture, speech, hand and brain that has defined the human' (Johnson, Limits, p. 483) in the long human past. In therefore promoting Flaubert's *Légende de saint Julien* as exemplary, interdisciplinary, engagement with French prehistory in such lights, I also offer this new reading of his text for its contribution and stimulus to the discovery by other scholars of French nineteenth-century 'cli-fi' already present in the guise of richly archaeological 'prehistoric fiction'. After all, '[t]hat the French invented pf will come as no surprise given the wealth of archaeological evidence that was discovered thereafter 1859'.³¹ Pierre Boitard's *Paris avant les hommes* (1861) is allegedly the first example. Yet Bouillet's 'Les Fossiles' (1854) already stakes out the more inclusive poetic case for return to (older) forms of dramatic, material arts in French prehistoric literature. The genre's grasp of climate change, and the ends of human history, are signally rearticulated in a

giant stag in Flaubert's *La Légende* as pivotal tale of 'préhistoire' for reappraising in the *Trois contes* the lower and upper 'limits of the human.'

Notes:

1. In Littré, the definition and dating of 'préhistoire' is 'Histoire de l'homme avant les temps où l'on a des documents ou traditionnels ou écrits. L'abbé Ducrost, savant très distingué, bien connu de tous ceux qui s'occupent de la préhistoire, LECUYER, *la Phil. posit.* janvier-février 1876, p. 82. For the facsimile see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58019485/f289> (last accessed 13 Jan. 2021).
2. See Elizabeth Kolbert's article of July 2019 in the *National Geographic*, https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/age-man-enter-anthropocene/?utm_source=BiblioRCM_Row (last consulted 13 Jan. 2021) and the apocalyptic presentism of usage as endorsed by the Natural History Museum of London, <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/what-is-the-anthropocene.html#:~:text=The%20Anthropocene%20is%20sometimes%20used,on%20it%20has%20become%20clear> (last consulted 13 Jan. 2021).
3. See the broader-brush identification of Leroi-Gourhan's 'originality' by comparison by Françoise Audouze, 'Leroi-Gourhan, a Philosopher of Technique and Evolution', *Journal of Archaeological Research* (December 2002), Vol. 10, No. 4: pp. 277-306 at <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41053189> (last consulted 14 Jan. 2021).
4. Christopher Johnson, 'Leroi-Gourhan and the Limits of the Human', *French Studies*, vol. LXV, 4 (Oct. 2011): 471–87. Further references will follow the short form, Johnson, Limits, with page number.
5. See Christopher Johnson's earlier 'Ambient Technologies, Uncanny Signs', *Oxford Literary Review*, (1999), pp. 117–134.
6. For recent studies of the Grotte du Renne that now adopt yet adapt Leroi-Gourhan's view, see Francesco d'Errico, João Zilhão, Michèle Julien *et al*, 'Neanderthal Acculturation in Western Europe? A Critical Review of the Evidence and its Interpretation' *Current Anthropology*, vol. 39, Supplement (June 1998), pp. 1–44 and for whether 'Neanderthals' mimicked modern humans see Thomas Higham, Roger Jacob, Michèle Julien *et al*, 'Chronology of the Grotte du Renne (France) and implications for the context of ornaments and human remains within the

- Châtelperronian’, *PNAS* (November 23, 2010), vol. 107, no. 47 at <https://www.pnas.org/content/107/47/20234> (last accessed 14 Jan. 2021).
7. Arlette Leroi-Gourhan and André Leroi-Gourhan, ‘Chronologie des grottes d’Arcy-sur-Cure (Yonne)’. In: *Gallia préhistoire*, tome 7, 1964. pp. 1-64 (p. 1) online at https://www.persee.fr/doc/galip_0016-4127_1964_num_7_1_1238 (last consulted 14 Jan. 2021).
8. ‘Chronologie des Grottes’, p. 22.
9. See the rigorously referenced entry for ‘l’homme de Néanderthal’ at https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homme_de_N%C3%A9andertal (last consulted 15 Jan. 2021) and definitions of ‘l’homme de Neandertal’ at the dedicated Musée de l’homme de Neandertal, La Chapelle aux Saints, showcasing discoveries in 1908 of a further skeleton at <http://www.neandertal-musee.org/expositions.html> (last consulted 15 Jan. 2021). In otherwise comprehensive specialist French and non-French history of prehistory – for example Arnaud Hurel and Noël Coye eds. *Dans l’épaisseur du temps: Archéologues et Géologues inventent la Préhistoire* (Paris: Publications scientifiques du Muséum, 2011) at <https://books.openedition.org/mnhn/2596> (last consulted 17 Jan. 2021) and the serious attention to French discoveries in John McNabb, *Dissent with Modification: Human Origins, Palaeolithic Archaeology and Evolutionary Anthropology in Britain, 1859-1901* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012) -- there is little attention to the problems, debates and impacts of the linguistic turn in the 1960s on its field as identified in Johnson, *Limits*.
10. For the major controversies see McNabb, *Dissent* chapter 2 and Jean-Yves Pautrat, ‘L’homme ante-diluvien: les vestiges de l’homme et l’avenir des commencements’ in Hurel and Coye, *l’épaisseur*, pp. 96–149 at <https://books.openedition.org/mnhn/2644> (last consulted 17 Jan. 2021),
11. Further examples also reveal women, such as Lady Eliza Gordon Cumming’s work on fossil fish from the Red Sandstone deposits quarried on her lands. See Mary Orr, ‘Collecting Women in Geology: Opening the International Case of a Scottish “Cabinetière”, Eliza Gordon Cumming (c. 1798–1842)’, in Cynthia Burek and Bettie Higgs, B. (eds), *Celebrating 100 Years of Female Fellowship of the Geological Society: Discovering Forgotten Histories* (London: Geological Society Special Publications, 506, 2020), 11pp. <https://doi.org/10.1144/SP506-2019-205>

12. See Patrick Paillet, *L'art des objets de la Préhistoire: Laugerie-Basse et la collection du marquis Paul de Vibraye au Muséum national d'histoire naturelle* (Arles: Editions Errance, 2014).
13. See <https://www.hominides.com/html/lieux/arcy-sur-cure-grotte.php> (last consulted 15 Jan. 2021), continuing that 'Ces fouilles n'ont pas laissé de traces ni de documentation vraiment exploitables. Par la suite, des chercheurs, ou plutôt des pilleurs, ont véritablement nettoyé tout ce qui pouvait être transporté rapidement... !'.
14. See McNabb, *Dissent*, pp. 45-49 and Pautrat, *L'homme ante-diluvien*, pp. 96–149.
15. See Aurélien Simonet, 'Cheminement archéologique avec les vénus de Brassempouy', *Archéologie des Pyrénées et des Landes* (2018), t. 31, pp. 141–157.
16. G. Chenet, 'A propos des faussaires', *Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique de France*, t.26 no. 1 (1929), pp. 78-80. Letter of 24 June, 1865 from the Marquis de Vibraye to J. Desnoyers, bibliothécaire du Muséum.
17. Ed. Lartet and H. Christy, *Cavernes du Périgord : objets gravés et sculptés des Temps préhistoriques dans l'Europe occidentale* (Paris : Didier, 1864), pp. 3–36. Lartet's cross-Channel collaboration goes unacknowledged in Sébastien Dubois, 'Regards croisés sur deux fondateurs de la préhistoire française: Édouard Lartet & Jacques Boucher de Crèvecœur de Perthes' in Hurel and Coye, *l'épaisseur*, pp. 244–265 at <https://books.openedition.org/mnhn/2659> (last consulted 16 Jan. 2021).
18. Lartet and Christy, p. 33.
19. G. de Mortillet, *Promenades Préhistoriques: L'Exposition Universelle* (Paris : C. Reinwald, 1867).
20. Mortillet, *Promenades*, pp.2–3.
21. See Dominique Poulot, 'Le musée d'histoire en France entre traditions nationales et soucis identitaires', *Anais do Museu Paulista*, N. Sér. v. 15 n. 2 : pp. 293–316 (pp. 296–299).
22. For an extensive study of its history and directors, see Patrick Périn, 'Vom Musée des Antiquités nationales (Museum nationaler Altertümer) zum Musée d'Archéologie nationale (Museum für nationale Archäologie) im Schloss von Saint-Germain-en-Laye', *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica*, 2006, p. 29–39. For the important interventions of Hortense Lacroix Cornu and major influence on Napoleon III for its establishment, see Bonnie Effros, '« Elle pensait comme un homme et sentait comme une femme » : Hortense Lacroix Cornu

(1809–1875) and the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de Saint-Germain-en-Laye’, *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 24 no. 1 (2012) : pp. 25–43.

23. Indicative are Benjamin F. Bart and Robert F. Cook, *The Legendary Sources of Flaubert’s Saint-Julien* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Buffalo Press, 1977), Pierre-Marc de Biasi, ‘Le Palimpseste hagiographique: l’approbation ludique des sources édifiantes dans la rédaction de *La Légende de saint Julien*’ in Bernard Masson, ed. *Gustave Flaubert 2 : Mythes et Religions I* (Paris : Minard, 1986), pp. 69–124 and Bernard Masson, ‘Écrire le vitrail: *La Légende de saint Julien*’ in his *Lectures de l’imaginaire* (Paris : PUF, 1993), pp. 116–30. See for representative interpretation Gérard Lehmann, *La Légende de saint Julien l’Hospitalier : essai sur l’imaginaire flaubertienne* (Odense : Odense University Press, 1999), Shoshana Felman, ‘La signature de Flaubert : *La Légende de saint Julien l’Hospitalier*’, *La Revue des Sciences Humaines* 181 (1984), pp. 39–57 and Jason Hartford, Flaubert, Ethics and Queer Religious Art: *La Légende de saint Julien l’Hospitalier*, *French Studies*, LX1, 4 (2007), pp. 434–46.

24. For Flaubert’s major spat with Frœhner on the archeological accuracy of Carthage in his *Salammô* see for example Isabelle Strong, ‘Flaubert’s controversy with Frœhner: the Manuscript Tradition’, *Romance Notes* (Winter, 1975), Vol. 16, No. 2: pp. 283–299. For the paleaeontological detail in the final tableau of the *Tentation* of 1874 see Mary Orr, *Flaubert’s Tentation: Remapping Nineteenth-Century French Histories of Religion and Science* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

25. Mary Orr, ‘Cultural History in Question: Flaubert’s *La Légende de saint Julien l’Hospitalier* and the Genres of Collective Memory’ in *Mapping Memory in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture*, eds. Susan Harrow and Andrew Watts (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 259–75 (p. 271).

26. Mary Orr, ‘Hunting Legendary Monsters in Flaubert’s *La Légende de saint Julien l’Hospitalier*, *French Studies Bulletin* no. 95 (Summer 2005), pp. 15–19.

27. Bernard Masson, ed. *Flaubert : Œuvres Complètes* vol. 2 (Paris : Éditions de Seuil, 1964, p. 180. All further references to this edition take the form ‘OC’ with relevant page number.

28. Louis Lartet, ‘Mémoire sur une sepulture des anciens troglodites du Périgod’, *Annales des sciences naturelles: Zoologie et paléontologie*, serie 5, 10 (Paris: Victor Masson et Fils, 1868): pp. 133-45. It is followed by the ‘Description sommaire de restes humains découverts dans les grottes de Cro-Magnon’ by M. Prunier-Bey (pp. 145–55), applying craniology to their

identification) and E. Lartet's 'Remarques dur la faune de Cro-Magnon' (pp. 156–160) confirming the co-presence of aurochs among the animal bones.

29. Louis Lartet, *Mémoire*, p. 142.

30. For a longer discussion of 'Les Fossiles' and Flaubert's ten-year efforts after Bouilhet's death to secure Rouen's honouring him in a monument, see Mary Orr, 'Epitaphs on Stones: Louis Bouilhet's "Les Fossiles" and the Afterlife of Memory' in *When Familiar Meanings Dissolve...': Essays in French Studies in Memory of Malcolm Bowie*, eds. Naomi Segal and Gill Rye (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 285–307.

31. McNabb, *Dissent*, p. 319. See also Nicholas Ruddick, *The First in the Stone. Prehistoric Fiction from Charles Darwin to Jean M. Auel* (Middleton CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009).